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Gold Dan:

OR,

The White Savage of the Great Salt Lake.

BY ALBERT W. AIKEN.

AUTHOR OF "VELVET HAND," "OVERLAND KIT," "ROCKY MOUNTAIN ROB," "KENTUCK, THE SPORT," "INJUN DICK," ETC., ETC., ETC.

CHAPTER I.

THE CHIEF OF THE DANITES.

"By that lake whose gloomy shore
Sky-lark never warbled o'er—"

THE Great Salt Lake in the heart of the continent; that strange body of water within whose confines fish swim not, whose borders are incrustated with salty crystals, glistening, diamond-like, in the sun; whose dense, saline waters reject the human who essays to plunge beneath the wave; and of this wondrous lake, so strange, so wild,

we shall relate a story so terrible, so improbable, that even credulous man might refuse to believe such things could be, were not the pages of history already stained with the red story of the impartial historian.

We write of the days of the spring of '69, when the great overland road was rapidly approaching completion, and already the grading parties of both the Central and the Union Pacific railways were in strong force in the neighborhood of the town of Corinne, on Bear river, just to the north of the Great Salt Lake.

It is a lovely night in the month of April, and the clear heavens above are spangled with a myriad of stars, and these peaceful watchers looked down upon as strange a scene as they ever had beheld since the world was young.

In a secluded nook on Antelope island, the largest of the little group which dot the waters of the lake, burned a camp-fire, and around the flames were gathered a motley collection of men, twelve or fifteen in number.

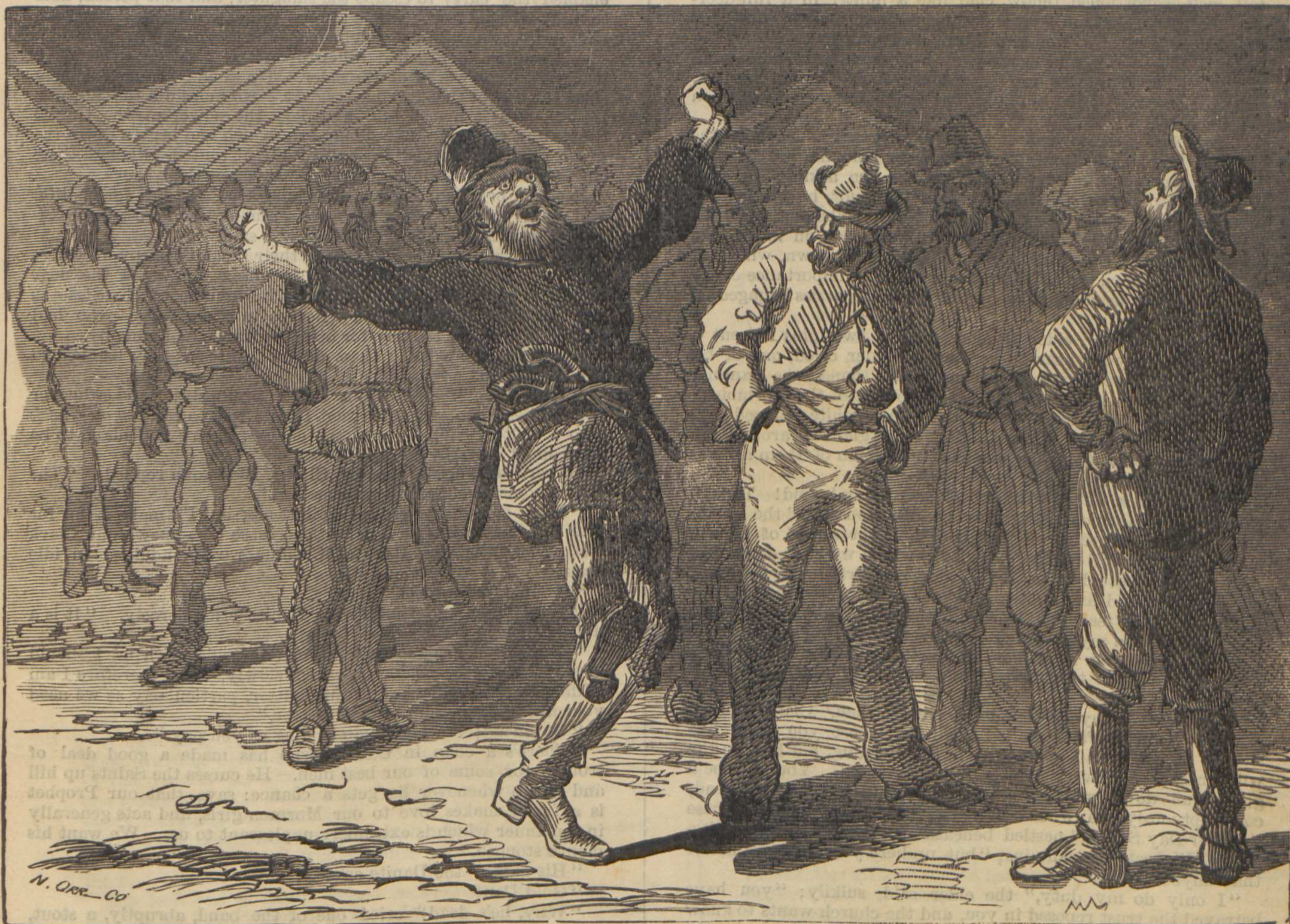
One might search all the border, from the waters of the Missouri to the golden sands of the placid Pacific, and yet not find a dozen as desperate fellows.

All were armed to the teeth, with one exception, and he, with his plain black suit and clerical aspect, was a strange contrast to the rest.

These armed ruffians, so fierce of face and so lawless in aspect, were Danites—the "Destroying Angels" of the Mormon host, and the black-coated man was a Mormon elder.

After generations, when they read the record of the Danites, will wonder that such things could be in a Christian land, and think perhaps that the story is over-wrought, when in reality the half of the dark deeds done in the gloomy canyon and desolate wastes of Utah will never be revealed until the Judgment Day, when the murdered victims rise in accusing wrath.

Early in the existence of the Salt Lake settlement, the wily and unscrupulous leaders of this strange band of zealots saw that to crush opposition, awe the timid and overbear the bold, it was necessary to use the sword. A sentence in Genesis suggested the means: "Dan shall be a serpent by the way, an adder in the path, that biteth the horse's heels, so that his rider shall fall backward."



"WHOO—YOW-YOW—WHOO LA!" AND THE-MAN-FROM-RED-DOG EXECUTED A WAR-DANCE IN THE MIDDLE OF THE STREET.

And so the Mormon elders instituted the Tribe of Dan, the Destroying Angels—a cohort of ruffians who faithfully carried out the orders given them.

Woe then to the man, or men, who attempted to offer resistance to the will of the Mormon leaders! One or many it mattered not, the merciless arm of the Danites struck them down. The deed was done, generally, in secret; then these apostles of a false creed lifted up their voices and prated of the "vengeance of the Lord."

And now by night, and in secret, we conduct the reader to a meeting of the Danites.

The "Angels" were scattered around the fire, reclining in various attitudes; the Mormon elder, a stout, gross fellow, with coarse features, pig-like eyes, and a jowl like a bull-dog, had just made his appearance beside the camp-fire.

It was evident that he had been expected, for one and all nodded in recognition.

This elder, Gideon Biddeman by name, was one high in favor with the Mormon "Prophet," and his chosen mouth-piece when orders were to be given to the Destroying Angels.

"Bless you, my children!" exclaimed the elder, extending his arms in a mock benediction; "all up to time, eh?" casting his eyes over the group. "That's good, for I've come to talk business to you to-night. You are all brothers of the tribe of Dan, the swords of the Lord—the Destroying Angels, who, with flaming steels, cut off the enemies of the Church of Zion. We are all bound by an oath—an oath sealed with blood, to carry out the will of the Lord, revealed to us through his anointed priests, the pillars of our Zion; and the penalty of breaking that oath—what is it?"

"Death!" answered a dozen voices, in chorus.

"Right, brothers, right! death to the traitor—death to him who refuses, either through fear or favor, to execute the orders given him, even though it were to give the fatal stroke to his own kin."

The ruffians looked at each other curiously. This lengthy prelude meant business; something out of the common was about to transpire.

"We meet to-night for important business, and in order that it may be accepted as it should be accepted, I recall your oath to your minds. Brothers, there is a traitor in our band—a man recreant to the oath he swore; his doom is death, and we have met to-night to inflict the penalty."

Silence succeeded the words of the elder. The Destroyers glared at each other in astonishment.

Then the Mormon leader again spoke:

"Let the man rise, avow his fault and plead for mercy!" he exclaimed.

No one moved.

"Then in face of all I will denounce him," the elder continued. "The traitor is John Clark, Duke of Corinne!"

A hoarse murmur of astonishment came from the lips of the ruffians, at this announcement.

And then, with a sudden bound, a man was on his feet—a tall, well-proportioned fellow, clad like a hunter in a full deer-skin suit, richly trimmed and ornamented—a man of forty or thereabouts, with a lion-like head, clear-cut features, darkly bronzed by the sun, and wearing ever a stern, saturnine look. His jet-black hair was rudely cropped short, Indian fashion, across the temples, and hung in long tangled masses down upon his shoulders.

John Clark was no common man; for years he had been the chief of the Danites and was reputed to hold his life as carelessly as though lives were to be had for the asking. A man not given to brawling, and yet, when in liquor, he was utterly desperate and quick to resent an affront. Duke of Corinne he was commonly called, and with good reason, for on more than one occasion he had "cleaned out" that lively town, which, at the time of which we write, was increasing in importance every day, being the head-quarters of the grading parties engaged on the railroad.

"You are a liar, elder Gideon, and for two pins I'd put a bullet through your heart!" the Danite leader cried, one of his silver-mounted revolvers glistening in his hand, the hammer raised and the muzzle leveled full at the breast of the Mormon.

The elder's face, ever a ghastly yellow-white, turned still more ghastly, and, as his trembling eyes glanced around the amazed circle of ruffians, he saw that not a man of them all was disposed to interfere.

"Take it back, elder! take it back, you lying hound! Though I wear your Mormon collar, I'm no Mormon dog!" the Danite cried. "The vengeance of the Lord and the sword of Gideon may do well enough for the poor devils whom we hunt down, but such trash is wasted upon me! I do your dirty work because I am a villain and an outlaw, and your Prophet pays well for it, but I don't fear you, backed by all Salt Lake. You can't put your heel on my neck and walk over me!"

"Hold on—don't be so cursed quick!" exclaimed the Mormon elder, just a little tremulously, and evidently alarmed for his personal safety.

"Don't you use your tongue so freely, then," Clark replied, grimly. "We ain't in Salt Lake now, where you scold like women at night and make it up in the morning, but here in the wilderness where every man is free and equal. You may be a great gun down yonder," and the outlaw nodded his head, contemptuously, to where Salt Lake City, the Zion of these "Latter-Day Saints," nestled beneath the shelter of the white-crested Wahsatch mountains; "but up here you ain't any better than anybody else!"

"I only do my duty," the elder said, sulkily; "you have betrayed the trust reposed in you, and the church wants to know why you have done so! Just carry your mind back to the Mountain Meadows massacre."

CHAPTER II.

THE ACCUSATION.

A FROWN came over the face of the Danite leader as he listened to the words of the Mormon elder—a frown in which all the older members of the band joined as their minds reverted to the past.

The Mountain Meadows massacre!

The pages of history do not record a wickedder or a more merciless slaughter.

The helpless emigrants, first lured into a trap and afterward ruthlessly shot down by the Mormon fighting-men disguised as Indians, and then their property distributed among these saintly men of Zion!

"And what of the Mountain Meadows massacre?" cried the Danite, sternly and hoarsely. "Is that deed of blood never to be forgotten? You and I, elder, will roast in hell some day for our share in that thing if there is to be any judgment hereafter."

A sneer passed over the coarse face of the Mormon. A coward at heart and yet no slave to superstition, living man alone he dreaded; the terrors of the reckoning in the world to come affrighted not his soul.

"The flaming sword of the Lord struck then, and Zion rejoiced to know that her enemies were smitten, hip and thigh!" retorted the elder, with the snuffle dear to the heart of the canting hypocrite. "It ill beseems you, a good son of the church, Zion's right-hand man, to speak in such terms of the righteous deed."

"Elder, when Satan receives us below after judgment is passed, he'll cry out, 'I can't have those Mormon butchers in here; they'll corrupt my kingdom. Give them a snug corner and a few bushels of brimstone and let them set up a hell of their own,'" the Danite replied, in biting sarcasm.

"Enough of this!" commanded Biddeman, stung by the hoarse chuckle which escaped from the lips of the outlaws at this doubtful compliment. "I did not come here to bandy words with you, but to accuse you of an offense which you have committed, and to listen to your answer."

"Go ahead; but what has the Mountain Meadows massacre to do with it?"

"You know that orders were given that all those vile wretches who composed that band of emigrants, who had poisoned our springs, cursed our church and our good and holy men, were to perish by the sword which they had invoked?"

"Oh, yes, I remember well enough; you wanted to plunder the emigrants, for they were well fixed with a big train, and so you called down the 'vengeance of the Lord' upon them."

Again the elder winced, for this truth was not at all palatable.

"The word went forth that all must die—that none must escape to tell the tale, for the Gentiles would have been only too glad to have made our holy vengeance an excuse for persecuting us," Biddeman continued, never taking the least notice of the unpleasant words of the heartless Danite leader.

"Well, what has all this got to do with me?"

"John Clark, you spared one of the emigrant train; you enabled the party to escape the slaughter, and that person, able to bear witness to the whole affair—to denounce those who took part in it—is now in the neighborhood of Corinne."

A deathlike silence had fallen upon the little group as they listened to the words of the elder. Times had changed greatly since the day of that terrible tragedy. No more did the Mormon leaders lord it over Utah, and defy the power of the United States government. The strong arm which had beaten down the great rebellion was not to be wantonly affronted, although these chiefs of Zion boasted the power of heaven at their backs.

Lee, the principal leader at the massacre, had fled for his life, and under another name was hiding among the almost inaccessible mountains in southern Utah, it was said.

The Mormon leaders had done their best to destroy all traces of their connection with the slaughter, for, with the near approach of the railroad, and from the number of Gentiles—as the Mormons name all non-believers in their faith—who had poured into Utah, the day for open resistance had gone by.

Great was the wonder, then, of the Danites as they listened to the accusation.

"It is false!" cried John Clark, promptly; "and whoever says it, lies! Do you think that I am a fool to run *my own neck* into a halter? Who makes the charge, elder? I demand to be confronted with my accuser!"

"There is no actual accuser, Clark," Biddeman replied. "The report comes from secret information."

"Some spy with a grudge against me; but I'll make it hot for him if I find out who it is!" And those who knew John Clark well, knew that the Duke of Corinne rarely indulged in idle boasts.

"You deny the fact?"

"Yes, a thousand times!" the Danite cried fiercely. "It is a lie!"

"Clark, you are too wise a man to trifle with us, I should hope," the Mormon elder observed, slowly, "and therefore I am willing to take your word in this matter, particularly as we need your aid just now in a certain matter."

"Go ahead; I'm your man as long as you pay."

"There's a chap in Corinne who has made a good deal of trouble for some of our best men. He curses the Saints up hill and down whenever he gets a chance; says that our Prophet is a fraud, makes love to our Mormon girls, and acts generally in a manner which is extremely unpleasant to us. We want his mouth stopped."

"His name?" the Danite asked.

"Gold Dan!"

"Why, he's dead!" cried one of the band, abruptly, a stout, red-headed, red-whiskered fellow.

"Dead! Well, that settles the wildest Gentile devil in Utah; but it must be proved!"

"Oh, no mistake! killed in an Injun fight on the Montana trail. I heard one of the pilgrims who escaped tell the story. Gold Dan was the first man down, shot plum through the forehead with a rifle-ball."

"Our information is incorrect, then, for we were told that he had returned to Corinne."

"His ghost may be waltzing round, but the chap himself passed in his checks a month ago."

"Well, that settles it, then; and now another bit of business," the Mormon continued. "Somebody is prospecting for gold or silver in the rough lands north-east of Corinne; it must be put a stop to; we don't want any more miners in Utah; there's enough here already. Keep a watch, and drive the party off."

"All right; I'll attend to it," Clark promised.

"That is all, then, at present. Good-by, boys; keep your eyes about you, and don't allow these Gentiles to crow too loudly in Corinne. This railroad ain't going to burst up our church; the Prophet says it must be a cursed poor religion that can't stand one railroad."

The ruffians chuckled, and the elder strode away toward his boat, which was pulled up on the shores of a little cove in the north east part of the island. He was followed by the Danite chief.

The Mormon shoved his boat into the water, and then, with his foot upon the prow to retain it in position, turned to address the outlaw.

"By the way, John, I've got a little bit of private business which I wish you to fix for me."

"All right; what is it?"

"I've had a revelation," and the canting scoundrel rolled his eyes upward, piously, "and that revelation commands me to take to wife that little Polly Pickles, who lives on Bear river just below the town of Corinne—the female doctor, you know?"

A peculiar look passed over the dark face of the outlaw, but as his features were in the shadow the Mormon elder did not observe it.

"Why, elder, you've got five wives already!"

"It is not good for man to be alone, John; besides this little thing is young and innocent: pert and pretty—just suits me, in fact."

"She's only a child, elder—a mere girl."

"Sixteen, John; quite old enough. You must manage the affair for me; I don't think that the little thing will take kindly to the idea; a little gentle force may have to be used. Think the matter over; there's no hurry, you know."

"Yes, I'll attend to it; but one last word, elder," he said, as the Mormon got into the skiff and took up the oars. "Who gave me the information about me?"

"Oh, I can't tell you that, John; but look out for yourself, that's all. Don't be too rash, for we've got long arms, and it ain't safe even for the Duke of Corinne to brave us!"

And then the boat shot out into the moonlit lake, while the outlaw, with folded arms, watched the villainous elder—a peculiar smile upon his dark face.

CHAPTER III.

THE FUGITIVES.

"THE elder is well served," the Danite muttered, "at how the fiend's name did it get out?"

For quite a while the outlaw pondered upon the question he had asked, watching the while the rapidly-receding skiff.

"I give it up!" he exclaimed at last. "It's too much for me, but I must cover up the trail at once. Curse the meddling spy, whoever he is! If I run across him, there'll be one rogue the less in the world!"

And with this observation the leader turned moodily away and rejoined the men grouped around the camp-fire.

"Nothing more to-night, boys," he said, as he joined the circle, "so you can turn in as soon as you like. I want six or eight of you to-morrow night in Corinne. Just stroll carelessly around the town and keep your eyes on me."

"Is it Gold Dan yer afther?" asked one of the gang, whose "sweet" brogue plainly betrayed that the south of Ireland claimed him for a son.

"Perhaps," the Danite leader replied.

"I tell yer he's dead, Cap!" the red-headed outlaw exclaimed.

"The pilgrim told a good square story; the first man down was Dan, with a bullet plum through the forehead."

"In that case, then, he won't trouble us much," the Danite grimly concluded. "Well, so-long, boys; I'm off. To-morrow night in Corinne, remember. Don't excite remark by sticking together, but just scatter about the town and at the first sign of trouble be on hand."

A chorus of "all rights" answered the leader's speech; and then the Danite departed.

A light skiff upon the shore gave him passage to the main, and then, drawing the boat from the water, he carefully concealed it in the underbrush, although there was very little danger of any one troubling it, for it was rare that human footsteps pressed the sandy margin of the saline lake.

The boat concealed, the Danite struck off to the north-east, following a little trail which wound over the rough surface of the broken country.

The trail was so dimly defined that it would have puzzled the eyes of an Indian tracker to have followed it, and yet the dark-

faced outlaw pushed on, never hesitating in the least; thus plainly indicating that the way was familiar to him.

A good half-hour's walk from the shores of the lake, and the Danite crossed the main road southward leading to Ogden; thence to Salt Lake, and then, a short half-mile east of the main trail, up amid the spurs of the Wahsatch mountains, in a lonely glen, from whence a fine view of the surrounding country for miles around could be had. The outlaw halted in front of a small log hut, stoutly framed, with loopholes for musketry in the walls, and placed directly against the almost perpendicular side of the mountain.

This was the home of the desperate Danite leader, the outlaw's retreat.

Alone, a single man might hold it against a hundred while his ammunition held out and he was well provisioned. Thirst he need not fear, for a living spring gushed forth from the foot of the rock just inside the cabin, and then, flowing under the wall, found its way down the hillside to the Weber river.

And so cunningly had this desperate man, who expected to meet a foe in every living creature, pitched his camp, that even if the door of the cabin was carried by direct assault—the only possible way to gain an entrance to the fortress, for the wooden roof was covered with clay, carefully packed on the logs so as to be completely fireproof—successful resistance could still be offered, for within the hut an arched tunnel had been skillfully run into the side of the mountain, the entrance guarded by stout logs, with just room enough in the center for a single man to pass.

It was plain that the foe who attempted to take the Destroyer in his den might far better hope to conquer the African lion free in his native woods.

The outlaw unlocked the heavy padlock, which, in connection with a massive chain, fastened the door, and entered the cabin. All was dark, except that from the cavern in the side of the mountain a ray of light streamed forth, stealing through the log piling and the tattered blanket which marked the narrow doorway.

Passing through the aperture, Clark found himself within the cavern's center.

Five or six feet wide only at the doorway, the cavity widened out into a room ten or twelve feet square, and then again contracted into a narrow, tunnel-like passage winding into the bosom of the mountain.

This passage was plunged in utter darkness, turning as it did abruptly to the right, so that its length could not be ascertained without an examination.

A single candle stuck in a hollow of the wall dimly illuminated this strange apartment.

Two occupants had this secure retreat when the outlaw entered it.

Crouched upon a rock, just under the candle, was a man smoking—a stoutly-built fellow dressed in shabby garments, and with a face as dark as an Indian's; his hair, too, was arranged savage fashion, clipped short across the front as though severed by the sharp edge of a bowie-knife, and flowing down long upon his shoulders behind. No Indian, though, was the man, for a short, black beard covered the chin.

The other occupant of the room was a boy some fifteen or sixteen years of age—a fragile, delicate-looking lad, dressed poorly like the other, very dark in face and with his jet-black hair cut tight to his head. He was sound asleep on a buffalo-robe spread upon the floor.

Not long for this world was the lad, to judge from the face and the fragile form.

"Asleep?" asked the Danite, glancing at the boy as he entered the room.

"Yes."

"So much the better; for I've something important to say to you."

The man removed the cigar from his mouth and looked anxiously at the Danite.

"You must get out; your presence here has either been discovered or else it is shrewdly suspected. One of the Mormon elders accused me to-night of sheltering a survivor of the Mountain Meadows massacre."

"The Mountain Meadows massacre!" the man exclaimed.

"Yes; no need for you to say a word about it," the outlaw continued, quickly. "I ask you no questions, and you need not volunteer any information. Suffice it that you have a claim upon me which I respect; my home, my money, my influence are yours as long as you demand them, but for the present, since it is known that you are here, it is better that you should get out. I am pretty sure that no one has recognized you, so that in Corinne no one will be able to pick you out as the man who enjoyed John Clark's hospitality. Strangers are pouring into the town every day. You had better open a little store, cigars and notions, or something of that kind; no one will be apt to suspect you. If you need money, mine is at your service. At any rate you must not remain here. I am liable to be visited by the Mormon elder at any time, and you know what the Mormons are," and as the Danite finished he nodded toward the boy.

"You have discovered, then?" the man said, slowly.

"I'm not blind."

"Well, I'll go, although I would prefer to hide away from all the world. I fear that, in spite of my precautions the man I dread will find me out."

"Who and what is he?"

"A man who lives by his wits—Richard Velvet he calls himself, though they say he has another name, but he is generally known as Velvet Hand."

"An odd name."

"Yes, he is no common man. I believe that if I went to the end of the earth he would find me."

"If he comes to Corinne point him out to me and I'll soon settle him for you," the Danite observed, carelessly. "I run that town, and there's no ten or twenty men in it that dare to even crook their finger when John Clark takes the war-path."

"Good! then in Corinne I'll hide, and if this man comes!" the stranger cried, eagerly.

"He won't trouble you but once," the outlaw remarked.

CHAPTER IV.

AN UNEXPECTED GREETING.

QUITE a lively place was the "city" of Corinne now that the grading parties of the trans-continental railway had reached the neighborhood. And where the sons of toil congregate, thither, too, come the birds of prey—the liquor-dealers, the gamblers, the dance-house belles, rogues and rascals of every grade, every age and sex.

Like a mushroom the city of Corinne had sprung into existence almost in a night.

No miracle Aladdin's palace to the followers of the iron way across the continent; a "city" of tents and shanties sprung into life and being every time the railroad army halted to take breath.

First, the barren, treeless prairie covered with sage-brush and flecked with alkali; then the prospecting gang of graders, and, then, presto! a city of a thousand souls almost in a breath.

Debatable ground was Corinne; first a little Mormon settlement, a scattered house here and there along the banks of the river; but with the sudden rise to the dignity of a "city" of hotels, saloons, dance-houses, and gaming dens, interspersed with a few stores now and then, the vast rush of the outside barbarians—the "Gentiles"—stifled the Mormon influence so that it amounted to very little, although the "Saints" strove hard to retain control over the motley denizens of the mushroom town.

At the time of which we write, although numbering over a thousand souls, Corinne was utterly without any local government, although with that peculiar instinct, so natural to the Anglo-Saxon breast, the inhabitants had talked about organizing a regular government and electing the proper officers to run the thing; but as this had not yet been done, each inhabitant was a law unto himself.

One could never have told though from the appearance of the town that the lively city was "running" itself, for there were few brawls, considering the number of rough and violent men congregated within the limits of the town, their passions unrestrained by the stern control of law's powerful hand.

But then, every man, nearly, carried arms, was ready to use them, too, and everybody knew it; a quarrel meant "business," and few of the roughs even were anxious for sudden death.

Still the desperadoes would fight among themselves, would kill each other; there was "a man for breakfast" every now and then; but it was rare that a peaceable citizen, minding his own business, was interfered with, and so, upon the whole, for so brisk a place, Corinne had reason to boast of the good order which generally prevailed within its limits.

Built after the usual fashion of railway towns, nearly all of the buildings being strung along a single street, through the center of which the railway ran, it would not have taken a stranger long to "do" the town.

As we have said, every other house was either a hotel, a saloon, a dance-house or a gaming den, and sometimes all four collected together in one building, as was notably the case with a palatial establishment—palatial for the frontier—which displayed as its sign a turreted stone building with flags flying, and over it the inscription:

THE CASTLE OF DURANGO.

Here, under one roof was a hotel, a saloon, a dance-house and a gambling hell.

The Castle of Durango was, by a long chalk—to use the common expression—far ahead of anything else in the city of Corinne.

It was the best hotel in the town, kept the best liquors in its saloon, boasted the prettiest girls in its dance-house, and ran the squarest and largest game in its apartment sacred to the goddess Fortune.

Michael Castana, a tall, broad-shouldered Mexican, of middle age, kept the place, assisted by a woman whom he called his sister, and whose fame extended far and wide.

Katherine Castana—Kate of Durango, as she was generally termed—was no common girl.

Tall and queenly in stature, superbly formed, with a figure that would have excited the admiration of the old-time sculptor who carved the Roman Venus; a face, pure Spanish in its type, and as fair as had ever sat upon the shoulders of a Castilian maid; eyes black as night and as lustrous as the sun-kissed waters of the arrowy Guadalquivir, Hispania's fairest river; lips red as the cactus flower of the Mexican desert and formed after the arch of Cupid's bow; hair soft as finest silk, and shining in its jetty blackness like the wild cherry's coat, gathered in a simple knot at the back of the head and held in place by a gold-handled dagger, the blade Toledo steel, that boasted the ice-brook's temper, she was indeed a wondrous maid!

And this superb creature, as fair as ever painter dreamed of, as perfect as ever sculptor wished for, was simply and purely a female gambler.

Queen of Monte she was called, and over the carded table she presided in the gambling den situated in the right wing of "The Castle of Durango."

Great attraction was she, too, for many a dollar was risked in the saloon simply because the owner desired to feast his eyes upon the beautiful face of the Monte Queen.

Fair as Diana, the fabled goddess, was she; and as chaste, too, for no living man could boast of favors received from Durango Kate.

A charming smile and a pleasant word for all—but no more, and so strong the influence of her proud way that the worst ruffian in the town hesitated to provoke her wrath.

'Twas said, too, that the dagger in her hair was no child's toy, but was a poisoned weapon, the merest scratch of which would bring certain death, and that she, if affronted, would not hesitate to use it.

And now, having described this strange flower, who seems to bloom with grace and purity in this hotbed of vice, we will look in upon her at the hour of nine at night as she holds her court in the gambling saloon.

The place is full of people; 'tis the common resort of the men of the town after nightfall to hear the news and talk over past events. No one is pressed to either play or drink; the place is as free to the looker-on as to the man who desires to spend money.

Katherine, reclining in a richly-cushioned arm-chair, just back of the monte-table, over which an assistant was now presiding, was smoking a dainty cigarette, the one peculiar weakness of the Spanish-Mexican dame, and chatting with the frequenters of the saloon as they sauntered by.

There was very little playing going on at present; gambling in earnest rarely commenced until after ten. The occupants of the room were conversing together and watching the newcomers, and as nearly every eye was fixed upon the door, the entrance of a man, peculiar both in face and dress, at once excited general attention.

He was just a little above the medium height, splendidly built, dressed in a full suit of buck-skin, wearing upon his feet the pointed moccasins of the Pawnee tribe, and upon his head the raccoon-cap of the hunter, the snout of the animal projecting down over the forehead, the bushy, barred tail dangling against the neck, behind; keen brown-black eyes, a bronzed, manly face, the chin boasting a full brown beard, the hair, dark brown in color, pushed back behind the ears and reaching clear to the shoulders, and we have the pen picture of the new-comer.

Men in deer-skin were common enough in the town of Corinne, and yet the entrance of this man excited general amazement.

Plenty of men in deer-skin, but no trapper, mule-driver or Indian guide who carried upon his person a small fortune in the shape of buttons made out of gold-pieces.

Hundreds of dollars' worth of the precious metal at least he carried upon his person in this peculiar way; and few in the city of Corinne who would not have recognized Gold Dan, the wildest dare-devil on the frontier, at a single glance.

"Gold Dan, by hookey!" an old gaunt fellow cried, and the crowd took up the exclamation, much to the astonishment of the individual in question, who halted at the door, evidently completely astonished by the reception.

And the good folks of Corinne were astonished, too. Upon good authority Gold Dan had been reported slain in an Indian attack, a month before, on the Montana trail, yet here he was, looking about the same, except that he had let his hair and beard grow.

"Why, I heered you were dead, ole man!" one of the crowd exclaimed.

"Oh, no; I'm alive," was the careless reply, but it was plain from the way he looked around him that he felt ill at ease.

"Dan, I want to speak to you!" exclaimed Kate, abruptly, and speaking as if he were an old acquaintance.

"Certainly," the man responded, and at once made his way to where the haughty beauty reclined in her chair.

"You foolish fellow! don't you know that it is as much as your life is worth to come here?"

"No; why? What have I to fear?" Gold Dan asked, apparently mystified, and yet endeavoring to look unconcerned.

"After running away with that Mormon's wife—fly at once—ah! it is too late!"

John Clark, with six or seven other Mormons, at that instant sauntered into the room.

CHAPTER V.

GOLD DAN'S MISDEED.

"Too late! what do you mean?" and perceiving that her glance was fixed upon the door, he turned his head and looked in that direction.

Clark and his companions had advanced to the bar, which was close by the door, and had called for drinks, without troubling themselves to look around the room.

"Don't you see the Duke of Corinne?"

"And who is it that rejoices in that high-sounding appellation?" Dan asked, apparently in blissful ignorance.

"What is the matter with you?" Kate cried in astonishment; "you know John Clark well enough!"

"Oh, yes—certainly!" Dan responded, quite readily; "but touching this Duke of Corinne that you spoke of—"

"Why, that's John Clark!" the girl returned, amazed. "Don't you remember?"

"Oh yes, of course, now that you speak of it," the man confessed, with seeming indifference; "but I've such a poor head to remember anything."

"I don't see how you could possibly forget John Clark, and you've only been away about four months."

The girl was evidently mystified, hardly knowing what to make of the man.

"Four months, eh?" Gold Dan remarked, slowly and reflectively, "and I've been gone four months?"

"Well, you ought to know; but you're wasting time; why don't you escape through one of the windows? They have not seen you yet."

"Who do you mean?" Dan asked, apparently not in the least alarmed, "Clark and his—"

"His Mormons!"

"Oh, that party that came in are all Mormons, eh?"

Kate stared at the speaker for a moment in utter wonder.

"Why, what has got into you? You know every man of them well enough!"

"Do I? oh, yes, of course," but it was plain the speaker was puzzled.

"And there is Bellman Googer, who has sworn to shoot you on sight!"

"The deuce he has!" and the man appeared astonished at the intelligence. "Will you have the kindness to point him out to me, so that I can be on the look-out for the gentleman?"

"Why, you know him as well as you know me!" was Kate's quick reply, as she half-rose from her seat.

Dan took a good look at the beautiful face of the girl, and then answered, slowly:

"Yes, I suppose I do; but which one of the crowd yonder is he?"

"That stout, fat man with the big boots, drinking champagne."

"Oh, yes, I see; and he's going to kill me on sight, is he?"

"Yes, you know he is. Come! don't be rash! You can easily escape through one of the windows; none of them have seen you yet; it has been reported that you were killed on the Montana trail, and one man said that he saw you dead, with a bullet through the brain. Your appearance here to-night is a surprise to all; so escape now, while you can!"

"Oh, no," and he spoke decidedly; "I'm not going to expose myself to the chance of having a hole drilled through me by hopping through the back window. If I had dreamed that I was so well-known in this town, I would have kept away from it."

"Are you crazy?" Kate now cried, in marked astonishment.

"Yes, I believe my head is a little affected," Dan responded.

"You see I was struck by a ball in the head, and that has probably impaired my memory."

"You seem strangely forgetful!"

"I am; the fact is, miss, I don't remember any more about these men than if I had never been in this town before."

"You are joking!"

"No, honest injun; and, by the way, what have I done to this fat man that he desires to imbrue his hands in my gore?"

"Why, you cannot possibly have forgotten!" Kate cried.

"I assure you that my memory of the life that I, Gold Dan, led in this town is utterly gone. Why, to give you an idea, I couldn't even tell you your name."

"Is it possible?"

"Quite so; so please explain at once what I have done to this fat Mormon, so that I may be prepared for him, when he discovers me, which he will be sure to do after he gets through drinking."

"You ran away with one of his wives—his fifth wife, the youngest and the prettiest of them all, Mary-Jane!"

"Oh, I run off with Mary-Jane, did I?" and this strange man made a comical face.

"Yes, where is she now?"

"Hang me if I know; but I say, is there anything else that I have done—are there any more men around Corinne, that you know of, who are dying to take my scalp?"

"All the Mormons hate you!"

"Why?"

"You know well enough! you call them names—say that their Prophet is a fraud—"

"And so he is!" he cried, abruptly. "In that particular the Gold Dan of the present exactly agrees with the Gold Dan of the past."

"You will stay, then, and brave the danger?" the girl asked, anxiously.

"Yes; I reckon from the manner in which I was greeted on my entrance, a while ago, that I am not without friends in this place."

"No doubt you have friends, but few men in the town would care to take your part if John Clark takes a hand in the game," Kate answered earnestly.

"John Clark? That's the big fellow yonder, the Duke of Corinne, eh?"

"Yes—a very dangerous man."

"He runs the town?"

"Yes, no five or ten men dare to stand against him. He is the chief of the Danites—the terrible Destroying Angels that execute the vengeance of the Mormon leader. He is said to have killed over fifty men with his own hand."

"A terrible fellow, ain't he?" and as Gold Dan made the remark, with his keen, cool eyes he was surveying the proportions of the Mormon leader, but there was no look of apprehension on his features.

"But you do not seem to fear him," and Kate looked into the face of the buckskin-clad man with a curious gaze.

"Fear, miss? I reckon I don't know the meaning of the word when applied to a human," he answered, quietly. "When my time comes I'll die, and not before; but let me take this opportunity to thank you for the service you have rendered me."

Through your warning I am prepared for my enemies. I fancy that Gold Dan must hold a pretty high place in your esteem."

The girl laughed.

"You and English Will are my two best friends, and I don't know which of you I like the best," she replied, lightly.

"English Will?"

"Yes, he is the captain of the grading gang on the Union Pacific, you know."

"Oh, yes," and he looked around. "Is he here to-night?"

"Not yet; but you and he mustn't quarrel, mind!"

"No fear of that, for I'm the mildest-mannered man in the world, if people let me alone."

At this stage in the conversation there was a sudden movement among the Mormons around the bar.

All those within the room who knew of the bad blood between the gold-dollared plainsman and the Mormons, had expected trouble when they had seen the latter enter the apartment, and now, perceiving the sudden commotion in the saintly group, they understood that "fun" was at hand.

"Gold Dan here? Whar is he, the infernal scoundrel?" the fat Mormon cried, in sudden wrath.

CHAPTER VI.

A HAND-TO-HAND ENCOUNTER.

"LOOK out for yourself!" cried the girl in warning. "It is not yet too late for you to escape!"

"Escapel only to be taken at a disadvantage elsewhere!" replied Dan. "Oh, no! I know a trick worth two of that!"

"But you are unarmed and they are weaponed to the teeth!"

Apparently Kate's remark was true, for no sign of warlike implements could be detected upon the person of the plainsman, but he only laughed carelessly, and before he could make reply, the big Mormon made a movement toward him.

Every eye in the room was turned upon the scene, while there was a general movement of the bystanders from the center of the apartment to the shelter of the side walls. There was trouble ahead and none of them were anxious to stop a bullet.

The Mormon, Googer, was a stout, thick-set man, pretty well in flesh, but as strong apparently as an elephant.

With the approach of the enraged man the girl had arisen from her chair and wheeled it over into a corner of the room, and then leaning over the back calmly surveyed the scene.

The high-back chair concealed nearly all of her figure from view; therefore no one within the room suspected that, yielding to her womanly liking for the dashy plainsman, she had resolved not to stand tamely by and see him slaughtered in cold blood, but, taking advantage of the mask of the chair, had drawn the dainty silver-plated revolver, ever her constant companion, pulled back the hammer, and stood ready to afford immediate aid to the assailed man if he should stand in need of it, which seemed extremely likely from the way things were going.

Yet the girl knew full well that to attempt to brave the Mormon power, or step between the terrible Danites and their victims, was hazardous in the extreme, but when did a woman ever hesitate to aid the man she fancied, no matter how great the risk?

A sudden silence fell upon the room when the burly polygamist strode toward his enemy.

Gold Dan had backed quietly against the wall so that it was impossible to take him in the rear, and there, cool and composed—the most careless and indifferent-looking man in the saloon—he awaited the assault.

All the Mormons, acting apparently by Clark's orders, had placed themselves before the door, which was at one corner of the room, so as to cut off all escape.

Nearly every person within the saloon had his hand upon his weapon.

No love was lost between these hardy borderers and the "saints," and his open attempt to rule Corinne went sorely against their grain; and more than one huge-bearded, flannel-shirted giant whispered to his neighbor:

"Dog-gone me ef he shan't have a fair show or else thar'll be a free fight! These Mormon galoots are running the thing too fresh!"

And the Danite, John Clark, looking around upon the circle of angry, resolute faces, began to understand that the day had passed when the crook of the Mormon finger could make the men of Corinne crouch and tremble.

The Danite had little fear, though, as to the result of the approaching conflict. The plainsman was, apparently, unarmed and the Mormon husband, burning to punish the successful rival who had stolen away from him his fifth wife, the youngest and fairest of them all, too, had no thought of using knife or pistol. A burly, powerful man, strong as a horse, as the saying is, an Englishman born and bred, and partial, as are all the inhabitants of the "tight little island," to the manly art of self-defense, his sole idea was to give the destroyer of his domestic bliss a terrible thrashing.

And the idea that the gold-buttoned plainsman would be able to offer a successful resistance never for one moment entered the minds of the Mormons.

Gold Dan had the reputation of being a good revolver-shot, and tolerably expert with the bowie-knife, but as a boxer he had never distinguished himself.

The almost breathless silence was broken by the harsh voice of the angry "saint," who had now approached within about six feet of the plainsman, and stood glaring upon him.

"So you've come back, 'ave you?" he cried.

"Oh, yes, I've got back," Dan answered with a queer smile on his face.

"And 'ow is the gal—curse her! 'ow is she, eh?" the Mormon cried in wrath.

"Pretty well, I thank you; how are you?"

"Do you know what I'm goin' to do to you?" and the irate husband menaced his destined victim with his huge fist.

"No; I haven't the slightest idea."

"I'm a-goin' to mash that pretty face of yours so that Mary-Jane won't know yer when you go back to her!"

"Well, that will be rough on Mary-Jane, won't it?"

"I'll jest l'arn you how to come foolin' round my wives!"

"It's to be a fair fight, then?" and the plainsman didn't seem to be at all appalled at the prospect.

"A fight!" cried the angry Mormon in contempt. "No! there won't be no fight, for I'll jest mash you into pancakes the furst lick!"

"Gentlemen!" the plainsman exclaimed, addressing the crowd at large, "you see how this thing is. This man forces the quarrel on me, and all I ask is a fair show. Can I have it?"

An emphatic "Yes" came from the lips of nearly every man in the room, despite the angry looks of the Mormon gang.

"That's all I ask!" Gold Dan cried, "and now then, you fat scoundrel, proceed to mash!"

"Oh, I'll fix yer!" Googer yelled, as he made a blow at the smiling face before him. It was a stroke that would have almost felled an ox.

But, like the lively flea, renowned in story, Gold Dan wasn't "there;" he dexterously dodged the blow and the Mormon bruised his knuckles against the wall, splitting the board clear in twain; but, before he could recover himself, the plainsman, who had nimbly slipped under his arm, had him round the middle of the body, raised him from the floor, and with a strength which few would have believed possible, pitched the burly "saint" headlong to the other end of the room.

Down went the Mormon, all in a heap, with a concussion that shook the very house to its foundations.

A long breath came from the spectators, who had anxiously watched the scene—a breath of relief that the Mormon bruiser had met his match.

Then Gold Dan quickly stripped off his gaudy hunting shirt and tossed it to the Monte Queen to hold, rolled up the sleeves of his flannel shirt, displaying a pair of arms, wonderful in their development; and, too, the bystanders saw that in the belt that girded in his supple waist, the plainsman carried a small arsenal of offensive weapons.

The Mormon, perceiving that he had taken no easy task upon himself, also stripped for the contest. He was bruised and battered by the fall and his right hand was almost useless, injured by the terrible blow which had fallen upon the wall.

"Game," thought, was the Briton; but he advanced with caution, determined this time not to hold his antagonist too cheaply.

But the Mormon, despite his boasting, was no boxer, as was soon apparent, for, after a few passes, the plainsman made a desperate lunge with his left hand at the puffy face of his antagonist; in haste the Mormon essayed to ward the blow, and uncovering himself by the action, gave his skillful foe a chance to plant a most terrific right-hander full in the stomach, just above the belt.

The blow when it struck sounded like a vigorous thump given to a bass drum, and with a howl of pain the Mormon went over flat on his back, knocked completely out of time.

The bystanders roared—the Mormons excepted, for they swore fearfully. This was the most ridiculous fight that the town of Corinne had ever seen.

It was fully five minutes before the bully recovered.

"No more fists! Give me a pistol, somebody!" he cried.

CHAPTER VII

UNDER THE MOON.

"Gi'n me a pistol, I say!" the enraged Mormon vociferated, smarting with pain, every bone in his body aching, the result of the violent concussion with the floor.

The bystanders had watched the scene with anxious eyes.

Gold Dan was pretty well known in the town of Corinne, having made it his head-quarters in the past, when in from scouting. A prairie-guide and scout, he was reputed to be very excellent in his calling; a bold, daring fellow, who held his life at a pin's fee; a good shot, skillful on the trail; an able wielder of the ponderous bowie-knife, so common to the frontier; but not a man within the room had ever imagined that the plainsman could "handle" himself so well in a fisticuff match.

No mean foe was the brawny Briton, as more than one boasting borderer had found to his cost, and yet Gold Dan had played with him as though he were but a child.

Even the dark-faced Danite leader, stern John Clark, knitted his brows and looked with wonder upon the scout. The bold "Duke of Corinne" was not given to underrating a foe, but even in his highest estimate he had never held Gold Dan highly; but after this display of the plainsman's quality, Gold Dan had rose much in his estimation; therefore the Danite attempted to restrain the bruised and beaten Googer.

"Don't make a fool of yourself, man!" he said in the ear of the Mormon, grasping his shoulder with his strong hand; "you've got enough; come away!"

But the Briton was as obstinate as a mule.

"I 'ain't 'ad enough! Blarst my heves if I'm going to give it

up so! It's 'is 'eart's blood I'm arter now! Somebody lend me a barker, now—quick!" he cried.

For a wonder the Mormon was not armed.

"Who wants a pistle?" cried a loud, hoarse voice, as a brawny, six-footer, attired in a red-flannel shirt, sadly in need of soap and water, rough pantaloons and big boots, strode into the saloon. A shock of red hair covered his head, the frowsy ends escaping from under the edge of the well-worn, high-crowned felt hat he wore, and his chin was hidden by a bushy red beard. The belt that girded in his massive waist supported a whole arsenal of small weapons.

The man was a stranger to Corinne, and all within the room looked at him with astonishment.

"Kin I believe me ears?" the stranger ejaculated. "Do I hear a free American citizen a cryin' out for a pistle? Ware's the man? I kin gi'n him a choice of we'pons all the way from a jack-ass battery down to a pop-gun!"

The giant's eyes now fell upon the figure of Gold Dan. He gave a start, brought his brawny palm down upon his thigh with a slap that sounded like the report of a pistol. "Wa'al, durn my old cat's left hand hoof!" he cried, "I reckon I've seen you afore, pilgrim! Shake!" and he made an affectionate rush at the plainsman and shook hands with him vigorously. "It's a heap of years since we paddled our canoes together!"

"Yes, you remember me, Gold Dan, eh?" the plainsman replied, with a searching glance into the face of the other.

"Sartin, in course! Why I knowed you was my antelope the moment I set eyes on you; but, I say, whar's the man that was a-howling for a pistle?"

The Mormons had taken advantage of the interruption, afforded by the giant's entrance, to gather around Googer and endeavor to persuade him to give up his purpose of meeting the plainsman in a pistol encounter.

"You fool! he'll settle your hash, dead sure!" cried one.

"You won't stand any chance at all!" declared another.

"He's a dead-shot!" exclaimed a third.

But they might as well have talked to the winds as far as producing an impression was concerned. The blood of the beaten Mormon was up and nothing but a duel to the death would satisfy him.

A fair type of the average follower of the Latter Day Saints was Googer—a brutal, ignorant fellow, with very little more brains than a bull dog, and possessed of the dogged ferocity that is the characteristic of that brute.

"I want a revolver and I don't want no talk!" he cried, bluntly. "I reckon that I'm as good a shot as he is, or hany two like 'im!"

"Let him have his way," Clark said, contemptuously. "Give him a revolver, some of you, and you had better make your will, Googer, for this fellow will be pretty sure to settle you."

Googer, busily engaged in examining the revolver which one of his companions had handed him, merely growled; his rage was so great that he could hardly speak.

The Mexican, Castana, the proprietor of the saloon, who had been a witness to the quiet scene which had transpired, now thought it time to interfere.

"Gentlemen, let me suggest that you adjourn to the street," he said, in his quiet, snaky way. "The moon is bright—there is plenty of light, and it is a far more suitable place."

"Yes, to the street!" Clark exclaimed; "we need air and room."

And then the Mormons at once poured through the door, taking the unwilling Googer with them; the angry Briton hated for an instant even to lose sight of his foe.

"And was that the 'coon that wanted the pistle?" the red-shirted giant cried, "and he wanted it for to slew you with! Wa'al, durn my luck! an' I was a-gwine to lend him one of my pop-guns; an' he's one of the Mormons, too, I reckon—the cusses that wrastle with five wives, when one is enuff to make a mule sick; but you kin salivate him, I reckon."

"I can try," the plainsman replied, quietly.

This conversation took place as the two were passing through the door, following the lead of the Mormons.

The moonlit street did indeed give ample scope for the designs of the men who were about to stand up opposite to each other in mortal encounter.

All the men within the saloon had marched into the street anxious to behold the shooting match, and even the dark-eyed Queen of Monte, dashing Kate of Durango, through the open door of the saloon watched the proceedings intently.

The Mormons had gone up the street two or three hundred yards and were clustered together; Gold Dan leaned carelessly against one of the awning-posts of the saloon waiting for the ball to open.

The bystanders generally had selected positions from whence a full view of the fight could be had without danger of stopping a ball. In these street encounters the bystanders are generally exposed to about as much peril as the actual duelists themselves.

Long John Clark left the Mormon group and advanced down the street to where the plainsman was standing.

"Are you all ready?" he asked.

"Yes," Gold Dan replied.

"So is the party yonder; are you willing that I shall give the signal for the thing to commence?"

"I've no objection."

"I'll do the square thing, you may depend upon it; you're almost a stranger to me, and maybe I'm the same to you, but I reckon that there isn't a human on top of this earth that can say that John Clark ever took a mean advantage of the man that trusted him. I'm no friend to you, stranger, and I shouldn't be

sorry to see you get the worst of it, but you shall have a fair show as far as this fight is concerned."

"That's all I ask," the plainsman replied, quickly, "and as to your friendship or hatred, I despise the one and laugh at the other. This fool forced the quarrel on me and yet I don't seek his life, although the moment he gets within the range of my revolver, I reckon I shall hold the fee simple of it. But, go ahead with your bird's egg; I'm ready for you."

"I'll take a position midway between you two," Clark said, a scowl upon his dark face, caused by the bold words of the scout. "At the word 'one,' you will step out into the middle of the street, at 'two' advance and open fire."

"All right, go ahead!"

"Clark turned upon his heel and walked up the street about a hundred yards, retired to the side of the road, and with his strong, clear voice gave the first signal:

"One!"

The two antagonists stepped out into the middle of the street, and then came a sudden shot, followed by the cry of a mortally wounded man.

CHAPTER VIII.

ASSASSINATION.

A SHOT waking the echoes of the night, a terrible yell of mortal agony, and a poor stricken man down flat on his face in the dust, groaning with pain.

It was the Mormon Googer! and the moan of pain from his lips was answered by a cry of rage from Long John Clark's throat, and then, in a twinkling, his revolver glistened in his hand.

"You villain! you fired before the time!" he yelled, deliberately drawing back the hammer of the revolver and taking aim at Gold Dan's breast.

The Danite's eyes had been fixed upon Googer when he had given the signal. He mistrusted the Mormon's ability to cope with the plainsman, and naturally looked to see how he carried himself, so he really did not see Dan fire the shot.

"No, by Heaven, I did not!" Gold Dan cried, earnestly. "I have not pulled a trigger!"

"It's a sure enough fact!" shouted the red-shirted giant, "and the man wot says he did slaps my face and insults the man I board with!"

"Yes, he did fire!" one of the Mormons exclaimed in answer.

"I saw him fire, the murderin' villain!" cried another of the Salt Lake gang, whose sweet accents betrayed the son of the Emerald Isle.

"Course he fired!" put in a third.

"It's a lie!" howled the giant, "and I kin chaw the ear right off the man that says it. That's me, boyee; you hear me? And now some of you ornery cusses come and pull my hair, for the love of Heaven! Whoop—yow-yow—whoop la!" And the eccentric individual executed a war-dance in the middle of the street.

The Danite leader felt a strong disposition to put a ball through the heart of the capering Hercules, and so end his fun, but by a strong effort he resisted the impulse. He had his revolver leveled at the breast of the plainsman, but he saw that Gold Dan was ready for him, and at this sort of game, Jack was likely to be as good as his master. Besides, Clark was really puzzled; he had not seen Gold Dan fire the shot, although of course he felt certain that he did do so, and yet he could not detect the clinging smoke-wreath which generally hovers around the barrel of a weapon for a moment after a discharge.

"You had better hold your yaup!" the Danite said, sternly. "This quarrel does not concern you in the least. Is he badly hurt?" he asked of the men of his gang who had sprung forward to assist the wounded man.

Googer, even in his agony of pain, recognized the voice and understood the speech of the Danite.

"Oh, I'm done for," he muttered; "he's plugged me right in atween the ribs, an' he never give me no chance to fire at 'im."

"You foul murderer! Do you hear the words of your victim?" Clark cried, sternly.

"By Heaven I did *not* fire!" Dan replied, utterly astonished by the strange turn of affairs. I appeal to all those who had their eyes upon me. Is there a man here who saw me fire?"

"Yes, yes!" cried the Mormons, vindictively.

"No, no!" the men of the town responded.

And then the Mexican, Castana, stepped from his position in the doorway into the street.

"Senors, all Corinne knows me!" he exclaimed, "and the town knows that I am an honest man. I had my eyes upon Gold Dan at the moment the signal was given, and saw him step out into the road; he did not fire and his revolver was not above the level of his waist."

For a moment Clark seemed undecided, but a torrent of exclamations from the Mormons pointed out to him the course to be pursued.

"No, no! he did fire! I saw him! I'll take my oath on it!" the Mormons cried.

"Blood has been shed—foully shed!" the Danite exclaimed, "and the crime must be avenged. I ask nothing but justice, and justice I will have if it takes all the force that we can muster yonder in Salt Lake to get it!"

The men of Corinne understood well enough the meaning and strength of this threat, and more than one in the crowd felt rising in his mind the wish that Gold Dan was well out of the

scrape. Few men of all those present, hardy, reckless frontiersmen, cared to provoke the anger of the Mormon leaders.

"And who shrinks from justice?" the plainsman cried. "Am I the man? Whoever says so *lies*; I throw the falsehood back in his teeth, and I'll make good my words with my body!"

"So will I!" the giant howled, leaping up in the air and smacking his hands together with a crack that sounded like the report of a pistol. "I'm the-Man-from-Red-Dog, I am! Dandy Jim's my handle, and I'm any man's mutton who is spiling for a fight in this hyer defickilty!"

"Oh take me in somewhere, I'm bleeding to death!" the hurt Mormon murmured.

"Bring him into the saloon," Castana suggested; "we'll get a cot for him."

As gently as they could the Mormons raised the wounded man in their arms and carried him into the saloon, but this operation brought groans of pain from the unfortunate Googer. It was evident that he was pretty badly hurt.

"Somebody go for a doctor!" Clark commanded, but hardly had the words left his lips, when a tall, slender, dissipated-looking fellow, in an extremely seedy suit, stepped out from amid the crowd.

"I beg your pardon, sir, but if I could be of any service to your friend, I should be happy to tender my professional advice. I am a medical man."

This gentleman was no stranger by reputation to Clark; an Englishman, by birth, as was plainly apparent by the slight "aw!" accent with which he flavored his speech, Corinne boasted few wilder or less steady citizens, and yet it was currently believed that he came of a good family in the old country and was a regular graduate of a first-class medical college. Anyway, he had proved, on several critical occasions, that he was no mean professor of the healing art, and that his skill as a surgeon—it was this latter branch that is most called upon in such frontier towns as Corinne, where "difficulties" are usually settled with knife and pistol—was far beyond that possessed by the majority of the doctors common to the frontier.

"Much obliged for the offer. Do all you can for him," the Danite answered.

The doctor at once hurried into the saloon whither the wounded man had been carried.

And all this while no one had thought of trying to ascertain who it was that had really fired the shot which had wounded the Mormon so badly, provided that Gold Dan really was innocent of the deed.

Plenty of time had been afforded for the wrecker of vengeance upon the Mormon bully to escape, and no one had either lifted a hand to prevent it, or to try and discover the lurking-place from whence the shot had been fired.

The Mormons were all perfectly satisfied that the plainsman had fired the shot; those of the townsmen who had their eyes upon Gold Dan at the moment that the signal had been given, were decidedly certain that he was guiltless of the deed, and the rest were wavering in their minds.

And now that the victim was removed from the scene of action, and the doctor had hurried in to attend to him, the Danite leader took decided action.

"This man is badly hurt; death may ensue from his wounds; and I call upon you to throw down your weapons and surrender, that you may answer for this crime."

"He never fired it, no how you kin fix it!" the-Man-from-Red-Dog yelled, defiantly.

"Surrender! Who to?" Gold Dan exclaimed—"to you?"

"No, not to me, but to a committee which I call upon the citizens of Corinne to choose at once. Here has been murder done and it must be atoned for. My friend has been shot down in cold blood without being given a chance of his life, and although I might take it upon myself, with my own hand, to avenge his fate, for if Corinne attempted to shelter any man from my vengeance, within two hours I could bring force enough to level it as flat as the back of my hand, yet I am willing he should have a fair trial. I ask no favors, neither will I show any!"

"No more do I!" Gold Dan cried, promptly. "I am ready to surrender myself to a proper committee at once, and ready to stand trial, for, as there is a heaven above me, I never pulled trigger on that man!"

"As fair as fair can be!" the-Man-from-Red-Dog assented.

"And I'll app'int myself one of the committee."

"You just hold your horses!" the Danite exclaimed. "I reckon that we want men that we know in the town, not strangers."

"And don't you know me?" Dandy Jim demanded.

"No, I don't!"

"Stranger, that's a heap of pleasure afore you!"

"Maybe there is, but I ain't in any hurry to enjoy it," Clark replied, menacingly.

And just then there was a little bustle at the entrance to the saloon that attracted the attention of all the throng.

The doctor came out.

"Well?" cried Clark, anticipating what was to come.

"The man is dead!"

And a little thrill passed through the crowd.

CHAPTER IX.

THE BEAR RIVER FAIRY.

Down on the banks of Bear river, just a little way below the town of Corinne, was a little rude shanty, much the worse for wear. Some emigrant had erected it with the idea of making a living by cultivating the soil around, but had speedily given up the notion in disgust and had pushed further on toward the setting sun in search of a more fertile land.

Within the little two-roomed shanty dwelt a strange couple, and one, too, known far and wide—a wee bit of a girl and an old, crippled man.

Polly Pickles, the girl was called, but the men of Corinne had a far prettier title for her; they called the girl the "Bear River Fairy."

The maiden was a pretty little thing. She was about sixteen or seventeen years old; small in stature; active as a cricket, and handsome as a picture; and yet her features were irregular, the nose disposed to turn up and the forehead narrow; but still there was something about the face attractive to the masculine taste at the first glance. She possessed the prettiness of a kitten, being arch, playful, and cunning. Her great, gray eyes were always dancing merrily; a smile ever dimpled her cheeks, and the shining yellow hair which floated freely over her shoulders glimmered in the sun like strands of beaten gold.

And then, too, not only from her personal appearance did she enjoy the name, but she had attended to sick and suffering men like a ministering angel.

Wise was she in a knowledge of "roots and yarbs," the simples of the forest effected great cures in her hands, and many a fever-smitten emigrant blessed the hour when the girl-doctor, as she was commonly termed, came to his bedside.

Her companion, the crippled old man, was a character indeed. He was thin and gaunt, with scattered, elfish-like hair, sticking up all over his head like so many bristles.

Old Joe Cripples he was called, and the name fitted him well, for he was bent nearly double with rheumatism, and was supposed to be a little weak in his mind.

"Granddad," the girl always called him, and the old man never termed her anything but "Puss."

It was a bright morning, and the sun, high in the heavens, was playing in shining ripples upon the surface of the river when the Mormon elder, Biddeman, halted his old gray mule in front of the door of the fairy's shanty.

The old man sat upon a tree-trunk by the door, gazing vacantly out upon the shining surface of the river.

"Hollo! here's that old maniac," the Mormon muttered, as he drew rein in front of the house. "I wonder where the girl is? I don't see her anywhere around."

Cripples never took the least notice of the elder, but still gazed with vacant stare out upon the water.

The door of the shanty was open so that the horseman could see into the interior, but the pretty figure of the girl was not visible.

"I suppose I may as well ask the old fool where she is. The crazy old loon! It would be a good riddance if somebody were to knock him in the head one of these days."

These reflections were uttered quite loud, so that the old man could easily have overheard them if his hearing had been keen, but it was well known that he was quite deaf, and therefore the Mormon spoke without caution.

"Say, old codger, where's the gal?" exclaimed the elder, raising his voice so as to attract the attention of the old man.

"Eh?" and Cripples looked at the Mormon as if he hadn't heard a word he had said.

"Where's the gal?" Biddeman bawled.

"All safe; nobody would harm her," nodding his head wisely. "Everybody knows her; no danger, thank you."

"Who in thunder said that there was, you stupid old fool!" growled the Mormon, in wrath. "I didn't say that she was in any danger!" he bawled. "Where is she? I want to see her!"

"You want to see her?" squeaked Cripples.

"Yes."

"What for? Be you sick?"

"Yes, I'm sick!" replied Biddeman, thinking that such a statement would make the old man go after the girl. "Sick enough of you," he added in an undertone.

"Got a fever?"

"Yes, a fever."

"Well, I dunno. I guess I kin give you the medicine as well as she kin," observed Cripples, sagely.

"I don't want any medicine, you old stupid!" the elder yelled. "I want to see Polly!"

"I kin cure you jest as well as she kin, every bit!" the old man persisted.

"I tell you I want to see her! Where is she?" The elder was getting tired of this bawling.

"Gone out," replied Cripples, placidly, and then he sunk his head between his knees and turned his attention again to the river.

"Where has she gone?"

"Eh?"

"Where has she gone?" yelled the Mormon, getting red in the face.

"Dunno."

"How soon will she be back?"

"Dunno."

It was plain there wasn't much information to be got out of the old man.

And then, just as the Mormon was about to explode in wrath, the girl herself came round the corner of the shanty, with a pail of water, which she evidently had brought from the river.

"Aha! quoth the elder, smoothing his frown into a smile, 'I was just inquiring for you.'"

"Yes, I heard somebody shouting, and I thought perhaps it was some stranger trying to make granddad understand."

"I should think that you would get sick of living here with this old lunatic. Why, he's as deaf as a post. I've been shouting at the top of my lungs, for the last half-hour, trying to make him understand."

"That's strange; he always seems to understand what I say to him."

"But arn't you lonely, living here with this old madman?"

"Oh, he's not mad," the girl replied, quickly, "he knows well enough what he's about; it's only an odd way he's got."

"But ain't you lonely here?" the elder persisted.

"Oh, no, not at all."

"Do you know, Polly, I'd like to carry you away from this place! You ought to go Salt Lake; that's the place for you. You're too pretty to live here in this wilderness. The fact is, Polly, I've taken a great fancy to you. How would you like to go to Salt Lake and be married to me?"

The elder rather prided himself upon his taking way with womankind in general, and in this little speech he had exerted all his gifts; but, to his astonishment, the girl, instead of taking the matter seriously, laughed in his face.

"Why, elder, you've got five wives already!" she exclaimed, laughing, "and what would poor little I do among so many? Why I should be lost!"

The Mormon got very red in the face, and it was only with a great effort that he checked the oath rising to his lips.

"My dear, that is an infernal Gentile lie!" he exclaimed.

"And then you haven't got five wives?"

"No, not even one, and if you consent to become mine, my dear Polly, I will never take another wife. You mustn't believe all the Gentile lies that you hear about us, Polly. You had better think the matter over seriously. I'm quite rich, you know, Polly, and I'll dress you up like a queen, that's so! You shall have everything that you desire! Silks and satins and velvets! why, you shall walk on them."

"And that will be so nice for granddad!" Polly exclaimed, clapping her hands with girlish glee.

"Granddad!" and the elder pursed up his lips.

"Yes, of course he'll have to go with me," the girl exclaimed.

"He's always taken care of me, and now that he's getting old, it would be both mean and wicked for me to desert him."

"Certainly, of course; such sentiments do you honor," Biddeman said with his lips, but his eyes said something entirely different. "Of course I shall look out for him. Any one dear to you will be dear to me. Well, I must be going; as I was passing by I couldn't resist the temptation to stop and exchange a word with you. Just think the matter over, and don't give any heed to those Gentile lies about me; good-by!" And then the elder put spurs to his mule and rode off, the girl, the while, watching him with a very peculiar expression upon her pretty face. If the scheming hypocrite could have seen that look, it is doubtful if it would have pleased him.

And Biddeman, as he rode along, put his thoughts into words:

"She is sly; the old man is an excuse; I must entrap her. Once in my ranch, force will do if fair means fail. I don't trust John Clark. If what I hear is true, he is after the jade himself. A message to visit a woman down with the fever! That will do, and once she is in my power, neither the Danites or the Gentiles shall tear her from me!"

There was peril ahead for the Bear River Fairy.

CHAPTER X.

HUNTED DOWN.

RIGHT on the outskirts of Corinne an enterprising builder had erected a small shanty-store; one story only, the front part arranged with a counter and shelves for store purposes, the back, partitioned off, forming a small room.

This building being a little removed from the center of the town did not rent readily, but at last a tenant came along, and as the owner had had the place on his hands for some time, he offered it at a bargain, which was at once accepted.

A small stock of cigars, canned fruits, and notions, was put in and the store formally opened.

On the frontier there is very little ceremony, and the neighbors of the new-comers—for there were two who were connected with the new store—soon made bold to call upon them.

Within twenty minutes after the shanty was made ready for business, the Celtic gentleman who kept what in his native "Oirland," would have been called a "Sheebeen"—a little whisky-shop a hundred yards or so down the street—sallied forth to call upon the strangers.

Mr. McGinnis, as this gentleman was named, rather prided himself upon his civility.

"In Oirland, me buck," he was wont to declare, when in cups, "there's moighty foine blood in the McGinnises. Go far enough back and it's dooks and princes you'll come to. So ye mind!"

Business was never driving during the mornin', at the Peep-o'-Day House, as the little whisky-shanty was called, the bulk of its trade coming in the wee small hours when larger and more reputable saloons were closed.

Therefore, the bold McGinnis, who was a little, sandy-haired, pug-nosed gentleman, much resembling a Scotch terrier in his appearance, had amused himself by watching the progress of the new enterprise.

So far two persons only had appeared in connection with the store; a man and a lad; both of good appearance although dressed very poorly indeed, but there was that indescribable something about them that plainly denoted to the experienced eye that their former station in life was far above that which they now occupied.

From their peculiar dark complexions, their jet-black hair, and general bearing, it was quite plain that they were foreigners.

"Injuns, bedad!" the sagacious McGinnis had declared, at the first glance, but, after a more careful inspection, he came to the conclusion that they were "Greasers"—that is Mexicans; Greasers they are commonly termed on the frontier.

When McGinnis reached the shop the man was lolling indolently on the counter, smoking a cigarette; the lad was nowhere to be seen.

The Irishman introduced himself as a neighbor; inquired in regard to the prospects for business, and ended by inviting the dark-featured gentleman to come down to his place and try a sup of liquor to keep the "could" out, although how any one could possibly take cold in that balmy spring air, was a mystery.

To refuse a friendly invitation to drink on the frontier is almost the same as directly insulting a man, so the store-keeper, well posted evidently in regard to the customs of the country, called out to the lad, whom he called Miguel, to mind the store and then he went with the Irishman.

McGinnis, naturally curious, soon commenced to question his guest, and the stranger answered readily, as a man would answer who had nothing to conceal.

His name was Jules Mercado, the lad was his brother, Miguel. He was a Texan by birth, of Mexican descent, and came from Matagorda county, where he had formerly kept a general country store; he had suffered the entire loss of his stock by fire; had succeeded in getting one-half of the insurance money, and being desirous of making a fresh start somewhere else, he had followed the advance of the iron-horse toward the setting sun, having heard that there was a good chance for business in the new towns springing up along the magic line which was to span the continent.

A plain and simple story, and told without reserve.

To his other neighbors, who followed the lead of the Irishman and called to scrape an acquaintance, the same tale was told, and so, before the close of the day, the Texan seemed to the rest to be like an old acquaintance.

The lad, Miguel, kept out of sight. He was not well, pined for home and the appearance of strangers disturbed him, so the elder brother explained, and no one wondered at it, for the boy appeared to be both delicate and ailing.

At the end of the first day of the stranger's sojourn in Corinne, about nine o'clock in the evening he shut up his store and strolled down the street toward the center of the town, apparently with intent to see the sights, for the center of the town was a sight at night when the saloons, dance-houses, and gaming-hells were in full blast and the place was crowded with graders (who were working on the road-bed of the railway), and other railroad men.

Just about an hour the Texan was absent and then he came striding along up the street toward his shanty, apparently under the influence of strong emotions, if one could judge by the convulsive workings of his face.

He tapped in a peculiar manner at the door of the shanty. The signal had evidently been previously agreed upon, for it was understood at once and the door was opened.

The Texan entered, closed the door behind him and secured it with the heavy bar which had been provided as an extra fastening.

The lad was standing by the counter, the large wild eyes looking earnestly into the agitated face of the man.

It was plain at the first glance that the Texan had been drinking heavily and was in a terrible state of excitement.

"He is here!" he cried, rapidly; "we are hunted down! Oh, saints in heaven! is there no place, then, on this broad earth where we can find shelter and be safe from this untiring tracker? He trails us as the blood-hound trails the human fugitive amid the fastness of the swamp, and what does the fugitive when he finds that, turn and twist as he may, he cannot throw the brute off the scent? If he is desperate unto madness he waits for the dog—risks all in one terrible struggle, either to kill the beast and so stop the pursuit, or else to fall a victim to his jaws!"

"What is the matter?" asked the lad in cold, quiet tones, his icy bearing a strange contrast to the feverish excitement which seemed to transform the Texan almost into a madman.

"He is here, I tell you!" he cried, his excitement not abating in the least. "We are hunted down! Were we buried deep in the earth's center, the opposing fates, who frown upon me, would lead this man to us. But, remember your oath!" and he strode up to the lad and laid his trembling hand upon the rounded shoulder, while, with his glittering eyes, now fairly blazing with excitement, he glared into the marble-like face. "You dare not break it, or you will burn forever in the fires hereafter!"

"I dare not," and the sentence came from the cold lips of the speaker, as a mechanical image might have spoken it—a cunning machine which could imitate the human voice, but could not infuse in the words a human soul.

"No, no, you dare not! It would be terrible!" he exclaimed with rapid utterance. "But this man! he is a demon! He laughs at steel; lead he defies; he bears a charmed life; he looks upon his foes and they fall and die. He would tear you from me—tear you away, despite yourself, but you shall not go!"

"No, I shall not go!" The speaker was like a parrot, and mechanically repeated the words he heard.

The icy calmness of the one was such a strange contrast to the frenzied excitement of the other.

"And he follows us, reckless of the danger!" the Texan con-

tinued. "Am I a child to always fly? Will the time never come when I will turn and strike?"

"No, let us still fly; there are rich mines in Southern Utah; let us go there," and a wistful look came into the eyes of the speaker as the words were uttered.

"Aha!" cried the Texan, and he caught the speaker by both shoulders with his trembling, feverish hands, and peered suspiciously in the pale face, "you fear that I shall kill this man—you fear for his life! Oh, I guess the truth! You cannot deceive me; but I fly no more! Either I or this demon must die! He has just braved the power of the Mormons, and, redhanded, slain one of their number. If he escapes the Danites he shall not escape me!" And with the words the excited man turned and fled again into the air.

The lad hesitated for a moment; then, seizing a revolver from beneath the counter, and taking his hat, he followed into the darkness of the night.

"If he dies, what is life to me?" he cried.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE.

"DEAD!"

The word went round among the throng.

And these rough, bearded men whispered the word gently, for death—actual death, has a nameless terror even for the wild and reckless.

Few, no matter how daring, care to visit "that bourne from whence no traveler returns."

"Dead!" exclaimed John Clark, and his heavy brows contracted; "dead, did you say, doctor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Murdered by that man!" and the Danite pointed his finger at Gold Dan, who, motionless as a statue, was standing quietly, waiting for events to develop themselves.

"It's a lie!" replied the plainsman, promptly. "I never pulled trigger on the man, and am as innocent of his death as a babe unborn!"

"No, no; we saw you do it!" yelled one of the Mormon gang, excitedly, and then the rest took up the cry.

"Yes, you did! you killed him!"

A movement toward the plainsman was made, but, as the Danite leader manifested no intention of taking part in it, and, too, as in a second Gold Dan had his revolvers out, the hammers raised and the glistening tubes leveled full at them, the "Saints" contented themselves with a few threatening gestures.

In truth, as well as any men, they knew that certain death for eight or ten at least lay in the borderer's hand, and though in the end the rush might overwhelm him, yet not a man of the Mormon band cared, in person, to meet sudden death for the sake of the final triumph of his party.

It is this kind of fear that enables a single resolute man to defy a host, which has often been done, and successfully, since the world began.

"He didn't do it, nuther!" an old, gray-bearded "Gentile" exclaimed, strong in the right and not afraid to speak his sentiments, despite the bravado of the Latter-day Saints; "I had my eye on him the hull time, and he never pulled nary trigger, and you lie, you fellers that say he did, goll-darn yer!" And in his excitement the old fellow shook his fist at the angry Mormon band.

And the assembled Gentile crowd took up the cry.

"He didn't fire the shot; he didn't!"

"Fire that shot!" yelled the Man-from-Red-Dog, at the top of his stentorian lungs; "I'll bet any man in the crowd ten thousand dollars to a slap on the back, that he didn't! And if any one of you ten-wived Mormon galoots are re'lly sp'ilin' for a fight, I'm your antelope, every time! Oh, for the love of Brigham! jest one or two—or three—of you long-legged, slab-sided, howling chaps, come and bite a piece out of my ear! Why, when I get through, thar won't be enough left out of the hull crowd to grease a griddle for a flap-jack! Took, took! cockle-doodle-do!" and the giant wound up his speech by smacking his hands against his sides, imitating the flapping of a cock's wings, and crowed as loud as he could.

This bold son of the golden land, although an entire stranger to Corinne, had already made himself quite at home and had tickled the outside Gentiles greatly by his bold defiance of the detested Mormons.

"Men of Corinne!" cried John Clark, in his loud, deep voice, which rung plainly through the town, "a friend of mine lies dead in yonder house, not killed in fair fight, for if he was, these lips of mine would never be opened to utter a single complaint. No! he was foully assassinated! All of you here know the terms of the fight. At the signal, one, advance and draw; at two, open fire. The first signal I gave, but the second never left my lips, for hardly had I spoken, when a shot answered me and my friend fell, bleeding from a mortal wound. Who fired the shot? Who had reason so to do? I did not see it fired, for I did not suspect any such treachery and was not prepared to watch for it, but there are a dozen here who did see the shot delivered, and they, one and all, swear that this man, this Gold Dan, who so boldly denies the charge, was the assassin."

"What of that?" frthe-Man-om-Red-Dog cried; "I can bring fifty who are willing to take their oaths on a pile of Testaments as big as a haystack that they didn't see him fire no shot, nary time, and how is that for high?"

The Danite never paid the least attention to the Californian's words—as if he did not think the giant worth answering.

"Men of Corinne," Clark continued, "I ask for justice—nothing but simple justice, although I have force enough here now by main strength to avenge this bloody murder and lay half the town in ashes if it attempts to uphold the foul assassination! And, even if my party is not strong enough and we should get the worst of the fight, is there a man in town so foolish as not to know that within three hours' ride lies Salt Lake City, where ten thousand men will spring to arms to avenge the death of one of their brothers, and a leading man, too, in the church?"

A good many in the crowd gravely shook their heads; they knew that the Danite was not boasting. Had not recent events brought the Mountain Meadows massacre again to light, and where in all the pages of history can one find a more bloody butchery than the slaying of those poor hapless emigrants, men, women, and children, about a hundred and thirty souls all told, after they had given up their arms?

Lee, the commander of the gang, who, disguised as Indians, butchered the helpless band, was still in the Mormon church; still high in the confidence of its leaders, and lived in perfect security on his ranch in Southern Utah, while the blood of the murdered victims, unatoned for, cried aloud to Heaven for vengeance.

Well might the patient looker-on cry aloud:

"How long, oh Lord, how long?"

"All I ask is that this man shall be tried for his crime," the Danite continued. "If he is innocent he will not fear to be tried by a jury of his peers."

And, just here, John Clark, able as he was, made a mistake. He had no idea of transferring his vengeance to the caprice of a jury of twelve men. All this talk was simply to convince the citizens that he was a good, square man, to use the western phrase; he didn't want to fight the whole town; he had made up his mind to kill the plainsman, for such were the orders he had received from the Mormon leaders who directed the terrible Destroying Angels. He expected that the plainsman would indignantly refuse to submit to trial, and then, deprived of the sympathy of the bystanders, he must trust to his own skill and courage in an open fight with the bloodthirsty Mormons, burning to avenge the death of their brother.

But, Gold Dan was quite prepared to stand his trial; many a year had he spent on the frontier, and, as well as any man living, he knew how sincere is the desire to administer even-handed justice that springs within the breast of the average borderman when called upon to sit in judgment.

Not much law but plenty of justice in Judge Lynch's court.

"That suits me exactly!" Gold Dan replied, instantly, and to his astonishment the Danite saw that he had "reckoned without the host." "A fair trial is all I ask. Select your judge, choose your jury, and go ahead!"

"Don't that jest lay over the deck?" the Man-from-Red-Dog exclaimed, in honest enthusiasm. "He didn't do it! he knows it, and I'm willing to swear to it, and yet he ain't afeard to stand his trial any time! Oh, he's a clean white man, he is. He pans out rich, every time!"

"A fair trial is all I ask," the Danite said, concealing his chagrin perfectly. "Give up your weapons."

"Oh, no!" cried the plainsman, instantly. "No Mountain Meadows massacre business on me, if you please! I'm altogether too old a bird to be caught in that way. If I'm found guilty you can hang me as soon as you like, but until the rope chokes the life out of me, I'll hang onto my weapons. I reckon that there isn't any danger of my attempting to fight the whole town. I am willing to stand my trial, willing to abide the consequences, but not willing to deliver myself up helpless to your mercy. I wouldn't trust you, nor any of your Mormon gang with the life of a dog!"

Bold words, but the shining revolvers backed them up well, and the Mormons had no alternative but to listen, although in their hearts they thirsted for the blood of the daring speaker.

"Nominate your court and sail in your elephants!" yelled the irrepressible Red-Dogite. "I'll rastle with Judge Lynch myself, if you ain't got any better man!"

"You'd better think more and say less!" John Clark exclaimed, sharply. "We want a man we know, and don't intend to pick up the first scallawag that offers."

The giant was about to make an indignant reply, when a citizen headed him off by nominating Captain Bob Smith for Judge Lynch—a nomination that was unanimously approved.

CHAPTER XII.

TRIED FOR HIS LIFE.

CAPTAIN BOB SMITH was one of the principal storekeepers of the town, and a man generally a favorite with all the citizens of Corinne.

The captain was a short, fat man, pretty well on in years, very red-faced and very bald; he was a great talker and considerable of a politician.

"Captain Bob for Judge Lynch!" yelled a dozen voices, and the storekeeper, blushing as red as a turkey-cock at the unexpected honor, came forward.

"Fellow-citizens," he said, "although this hyer thing is entirely unexpected and takes me completely by surprise, yet I do not feel at liberty to decline, for I think that it is the duty of every good citizen to put his shoulder to the public wheel whenever it is required; but I am quite ready to resign if you happen to think of any man 'round hyer who is better calculated than myself to fill the position. I have some knowledge of the

law—a good many of the citizens of Corinne's thriving town could say the same with truth, and the knowledge generally acquired in the prisoner's box—"and I can safely promise that the prisoner shall have a fair and impartial trial, the more so that I have just come on the ground and don't know anything about the affair at all, except that a man has been killed and that Gold Dan here is accused of killing him."

"I'm willing to be tried by the captain," the plainsman said. "I'm not afraid but that he'll do me justice."

"That's so, Dan! Oh, I'll do the square thing every time!" the captain exclaimed. "But in order that the whole weight of the thing shan't come on my shoulders, I move respectfully that a jury of twelve men be chosen; 'tain't hardly fair to put sich a thing as life or death all on me."

"That's so—that's so!" the crowd murmured.

"A jury's the thing—that's correct!" some one in the throng remarked, and the rest took up the cry. Two or three men always lead a crowd and the rest follow.

The Danite chief did not like the way things were going at all, but he saw it was useless to attempt to resist; the current was too strong; but he determined to "have a finger in the pie" anyway.

"I don't object to a jury," he said, slowly; "but I think that we from Salt Lake ought to be represented in it. This man is a Gentile who has killed a Mormon, and I reckon that with a judge and jury all composed of Gentiles he stands a pretty good chance of getting off, no matter how strong the proof is that he killed the man."

A murmur of dissent went up from the citizens—a little indignantly, too; they didn't like this strong accusation.

Captain Bob hastened to reply at once.

"As far as I am concerned, Mr. Clark, I assure you I shall try to do what is right, without any regard to whether the man accused is Gentile or Mormon. I calculate that any man that comes before Judge Lynch's court, when I sit on the bench, will get justice and nothing else, whether he is Gentile or Mormon, white or black, a red-skin, or even a heathen Chinese."

"I don't doubt you, captain, but it is only fair that we should have one-half of the jury," Clark answered; "I reckon that a man can be a fair man and give a fair verdict even if he is a Mormon. That gives you Gentiles one-half the jury and the judge, and I reckon that that is rather more than a fair shake."

There was no open opposition manifested, and the captain, after glancing around as if to note the sentiments of the crowd, turned to the prisoner.

"How does that suit you, Dan?"

"Oh, I don't object, although I reckon that the proper way would be to choose the jurymen by lot from the whole crowd and take them as they come, whether Mormon or Gentile; but you can go ahead; I don't ask any odds," the plainsman announced, confidently.

"Will you pick out your jurymen from among your friends?" the captain asked, turning to Clark.

The Danite nodded assent, and then the judge addressed the crowd at large:

"Now, fellow-citizens, we want six jurymen, so nominate 'em to one't!"

The Red-Dogite had not been inactive during all this talk; in the language of the politicians he had been "pipe-laying," and therefore a blue-flannel-shirted fellow, with whom the giant had been in consultation, lifted up his voice and cried:

"I nominate Dandy Jim from Red Dog for one of the jury!"

"I second the motion!" said another.

"I object to that man!" cried John Clark, instantly. "He has formed an opinion of the subject, and has openly declared that he does not believe the man to be guilty; he is not fit to sit on a jury."

"Say! is there one of your Mormon gang who don't think that he is guilty, or who ain't been hollering fur to kill him?" the Man-from-Red Dog demanded, indignantly. "Ain't I going to take an oath?—won't I act like a squar' man, or am I a liar, and is civilization played out?"

The big fellow had the Danite on the hip. In truth, there was not one of the Mormons who had not clamored for the blood of the plainsman.

The sympathy of the crowd was entirely with the Red-Dogite, and Clark saw that the position he had taken was untenable.

"But this man is a stranger," he said, with a great effort repressing the rage which burned within his breast, and which urged him to provoke a personal encounter with the free-spoken giant, there and then.

"So much the better!" Dandy Jim exclaimed; "if I'm a stranger I ain't apt to be prejudiced either for or ag'in' him. Oh, I'm an old tearer on a jury, now, you bet! I reckon I'll agree with the other eleven ef they all come to my way of thinking!"

And so John Clark withdrew his objection, and Dandy Jim was duly declared elected. Five other citizens were put up and accepted by the Mormon leader, and then Clark put forward six Mormons.

No one objected to any of them, though Gold Dan recognized that one of the fellows had been the most persistent in demanding his blood after the death of Googer.

But the plainsman never troubled himself to say a word; what was the use? He fully understood that as far as the Mormons were concerned the trial would be all a farce. The Mormon jurymen would be sure to find him guilty, no matter what the evidence was, therefore he held his peace, relying upon the Gentile members of the jury to do him justice.

It was arranged that Judge Lynch should hold his court right in the open street; the moon gave ample light, and there was room for all to witness the proceedings, which was more than could be said of any building in the town.

A dry-goods box was brought, and the judge perched himself up on top of it; some smaller boxes served as seats for the jury and the prisoner. Officers of the court there were none, although the Mormon leader had suggested that there was danger of the prisoner escaping, but Gold Dan had laughed at the idea.

"Oh, I'm going to stand my trial!" he exclaimed; "don't you be alarmed about that, and if I attempt to escape, why, you are all armed, and you can go a-gunning for me at once."

So the Danite leader was again overruled. It was quite plain that Mr. John Clark was not going to have things entirely his own way that night in the town of Corinne.

The jury commenced to ballot for foreman, but it was merely labor wasted, for the six Mormons voted stoutly for one man and the six Gentiles just as obstinately for another. It was plain that they might go on balloting until Doomsday and not decide upon a foreman.

Then a brilliant idea occurred to Judge Lynch.

"Gentlemen, you will never come to any decision at this rate; suppose you draw lots for a foreman."

The idea suited, and it was at once put into operation.

And, to the delight of the Man-from-Red-Dog, as well as the bystanders—the Mormons excepted of course—who were very favorably impressed with the good-natured giant, Dandy Jim drew the long straw, and was duly declared to be foreman of the jury.

"Oh, we'll work the thing correct, you bet!" he exclaimed, when the result was ascertained.

The jury took their seats, the judge was already perched upon the dry-goods box, a large ring around the judge, jury and prisoner, who sat facing the jury, was formed by the eager spectators.

"Who presents the case for the people?" the judge asked.

"I will," John Clark answered, promptly, stepping forward into the circle. "As the friend of the dead man and his brother in religion, I claim the right of prosecuting to the death his murderer."

"All right; and now who defends the prisoner?"

There was a moment of hesitation, which was broken by the clear voice of Gold Dan.

"I say, judge, if it's all the same to the court, let me defend myself," he said.

"There's an old saying among legal men, you know," replied the judge, eager to display his knowledge of the law, "that the lawyer who pleads his own case has a fool for a client."

"Yes, I know it, but I hardly think that applies to me, for I'm not a lawyer, judge," Gold Dan answered, with a smile.

"All right; suit yourself; and now we're ready for trial; produce your witnesses, Mr. Clark, and go ahead."

And so in the silver moonlight the trial of the plainsman, bold Gold Dan, for the murder of the Mormon, Googer, commenced.

CHAPTER XIII.

GOLD DAN'S MASTER-STROKE.

JUDGE LYNCH'S court generally deals in railroad justice; conviction or acquittal come quickly and with little regard to the tardy rules of law.

Justice, not law, is what the frontier men are after when they call upon Judge Lynch to officiate.

The trial of Gold Dan for the murder of the Mormon Elder Googer, was no exception to the general rule, for Bob Smith, Judge Lynch *pro tem.*, "pushed things" rapidly.

"Witnesses for the people!"

And then six or eight Mormons stepped out, and each one swore decidedly and firmly that they saw the borderer fire at the first signal.

"At one—you saw him fire at one?" the Danite asked, and each man swore stoutly that such was the fact.

Brief was the plainsman's cross-examination.

"You saw me fire?"

"Yes," stoutly, doggedly and defiantly the witnesses answered, all the while scowling with malignant hate at the bold borderer.

"And where were you when you saw me fire?"

The witnesses described the situations they occupied, and each and every one testified plainly that he was at least a hundred yards away when the shot was fired—but he saw it discharged nevertheless; this all of them stuck to.

"What was the position of my arm when I fired?"

Now here he had the Mormons on the hip, for although each witness heard the testimony of the others in advance of him—the first one examined of course excepted—and so had an example set to swear by, yet, such is the strange inconsistency and independence of human nature, that nearly every man chose to differ with his fellow, and no two agreed in regard to the position of Gold Dan's arm when the fatal shot was fired, but all testified that the trigger was pulled immediately after the word "one" was spoken.

"Are you through, Mr. Clark?" the judge asked, after the prisoner had finished his questioning.

"Yes, all through," the Danite leader answered. "If the testimony of six or eight men ain't enough to hang him, why then this hyer thing is all a fraud, and we're only wasting our time."

And as he finished, the dark-faced Mormon looked around him with an air that seemed plainly to say: "There, I've proved him guilty, now let him escape, if you dare!"

But to the honest men of Corinne, assembled beneath the moon, and watching the scene with all that deep earnestness so peculiar to the frontier where each man holds his life in his hand as it were, the evidence was not at all conclusive. The difference in the witnesses' testimony regarding the position of the plainsman's arm weakened all their evidence, and then, too, there was a widespread opinion among the "Gentiles" that the Mormons would not hesitate at any means to remove from the vicinity of Salt Lake City the daring man, who not only openly expressed his contempt for the Latter-day Saints, but committed the greater crime of running away with their wives.

"They allers stick to each other through thick and thin!" more than one man in the throng whispered to his neighbor, "and to git squar' on a Gentile, they'd be willing to swar the bottom clean out of a frypan."

"All through then, Mr. Clark?" the judge repeated. According to his ideas the Mormons hadn't made out a very strong case, and as Captain Bob was a very fair-minded man, he wanted to give them a fair show for their money before he called upon the other side to show their hands.

"All through, sir," the Danite replied, in his deep voice, which rose clear and full above the hum of the crowd.

"Why, hold on, jedge," cried one of the jury—one of the six Gentiles—an old, iron-gray-bearded man, tall and straight, and with an expression of great shrewdness written on his weather-beaten features, "it 'pears to me that you're pitchin' inter this thing wrong eend foremost. If I git the 'rifle straight, you're tryin' Gold Dan thar for the murder of Mr. Googer, but so far I ain't heered any testimony that the man's dead. I heered he was plugged an' that were all."

"That's so! Old Billy's right!" a bystander murmured, loudly, and the throng took up the cry.

Old Billy Mac Ado, the juryman, was commonly believed to be a pretty shrewd fellow, and in this case everybody saw that his point was well taken.

So the prosecutor for the people, as Judge Lynch rather grand-eloquently termed the dark-browed Danite, pricked his flint and tried it again, to use the old saying.

The doctor was called, and he, well posted in the usages of law-courts—the scamp had figured in a dozen in his time—testified quite clearly and directly to the point.

Clark hadn't the least bit of a lawyer about him, and it was quite plain that, in legal craft, he was no match for the scout, who had begun the evening's amusement by astonishing everybody with his pugilistic skill, and now was winding up by making them all open their eyes at his wonderful ability in the use of his tongue.

And yet Corinne had known Gold Dan for quite a time, and never held him better than a hard-drinking, reckless, devil-may-care borderer; twenty like him to be found in the town at almost any time, but the Gold Dan on trial for his life to-day was proving himself to be a far superior chap than he had ever gained credit among his associates for being.

The doctor testified: first, that he was a regular graduate of a first-class English medical college; second, that he had attended to the wounded man, Mr. Googer, and that the said Mr. Googer was suffering from a wound produced by a pistol-shot, and from the wound he had died.

"Any questions?" the judge asked, turning to the plainsman.

"Not at present, judge," the prisoner answered, "but I want the privilege of examining him after I get through with the rest of my witnesses."

"Any more?" and Captain Bob turned to the Danite.

"No; I'm through."

"Your turn, go ahead!" and the captain nodded to the plainsman.

"I want six men to step forward," the prisoner said; "six men who had their eyes on me when the shot was fired and who were not over fifty feet from me."

Twenty stepped forward in obedience to the call.

"Only six, gentlemen—the six who were nearest, please."

The volunteer witnesses whispered among themselves for a moment, apparently trying to find out which six of them had been the nearest, and then a half-dozen detached themselves from the rest and came forward.

It was with difficulty that the Man-from-Red-Dog, remindful of his position as a juryman, kept himself from joining the witnesses, as he had been only about ten feet from Dan when the shot had been discharged. But with a great effort he curbed his desire, although he did feel like waking things up with a yell or two.

The six testified, one after the other, clearly and distinctly, that they had their eyes upon the prisoner at the time that the first signal was given, heard the shot fired, and were positive that it could not have been fired by the prisoner, for he had just drawn his revolver and his hand was not above the level of his waist.

The six all agreed in this; they were testifying in regard to what they had really seen, therefore it was but natural that they should agree, while the Mormon witnesses were testifying in regard to what they *thought* they had seen, and therefore differed.

Clark tried a little cross-examination, but he was not clever at this sort of thing and soon gave it up, as he had wit enough to see that he was helping rather than injuring the prisoner's case.

And now Gold Dan made a master-stroke. He called back the doctor and made that gentleman describe the wound that the dead man had received and produce the ball. It was a rare one, too, weighing fully an ounce; evidently a derringer ball, and then he desired the jury to examine his weapons, and see for themselves, first, that they were all loaded; second, that he had no pistol on his person that could carry such a ball; third, that

all the witnesses, both Mormon and Gentile, had sworn that his revolver was in his hand at the time Googer got his death-wound. It was a horse to a hen now in regard to the verdict.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE VERDICT.

THE jury retired to deliberate upon their verdict.

There was little doubt in the minds of most of the crowd in regard to the decision, and even the Mormons could not help admitting that they had not made out a very clear case against the prisoner.

And as for the Danite chief, stern, black-browed Long John Clark, he was perplexed. At the beginning there hadn't been a doubt in regard to Gold Dan's guilt, in his opinion, but the testimony of the medical expert had suddenly opened his eyes.

It was plain that some unknown foe had taken advantage of the occasion to wreak his vengeance upon the Mormon elder, rightly judging that in the confusion of the moment the deed would be charged upon the plainsman.

But, whose daring and cunning hand was it that had laid the Mormon low?

Within the recesses of a neighboring saloon the jury had retired, everybody, except the barkeeper, being turned out, and that individual admonished to keep himself busy behind the bar, and not to watch the proceedings of the grave men within whose hands the sword of justice had been placed.

"All right, gents; I'll be as dumb as an oyster and as quiet as a clam," the gentle compounder of mixed drinks had replied, proceeding to ensconce himself under the bar, thushiding from sight.

Six Mormons and six Gentiles.

Six men strong in the belief that Gold Dan ought to be strung up at once without mercy, and six equally as confident that the plainsman was an innocent man.

It did not take many minutes to develop these facts.

One of the jurymen had proposed a ballot, and three times they had voted, the result the same each time.

And then the wrath of the man-from-Red-Dog burst forth:

"Nice set of jurymen you air, you Mormon skunks! all on you to wote one way all the time, you no-souled, chicken-gizzardd galoots! Say, some one on you come over here and dig me in the ribs, so I kin kill him to once, and then we'll stand six to five, and as the majority rules in this hyer land of liberty, the five will have to gi'n in!"

A chorus of indignant "Ohs!" came from the Mormons, and one tall, broad-shouldered chap took it upon himself, despite the weight and muscular build of the Red-Dogite, to dare him to instant conflict.

"Oh, hear this Gentile rooster!" he cried, in bold defiance; "don't you crow so loud or maybe you'll get your comb cut."

Dandy Jim's voice was at once for war. With an agility wonderful for a man of his size, he danced up to the defiant Mormon, and in the most dextrous manner smacked him in the chops with the flat of his monstrous hand. The force of the slap brought tears to the eyes of the stricken man, and then, with a howl, the Mormon closed in with the man-from-Red-Dog, and the two combatants swayed to and fro, closely locked in each other's arms.

The Salt-Lakers made a movement as if they intended to rush to the assistance of their brother, but the Gentiles, whipping out their revolvers, yelled for him to keep back.

"Let 'em alone! keep back! a fair fight and no favor!" cried one of the borderers, and the rest took up the cry.

"A fair shake and no favor!"

Then up from behind the bar rose the person of the urbane barkeeper, the genial Johnny Lynch, a self-cocking revolver in each hand.

"Gentlemen, I rise to remark, and my meaning is plain, that, while I despise interfering with any jury in the world, I would observe that the tumblers and glasses hyer cost a heap, and if you're going to commence to smash things generally, I shall have to interfere with your deliberations!"

But, there was no danger of a general row as the barkeeper apprehended, for the Gentiles had the advantage of the situation, their weapons being out, and the Mormons hesitated to draw, knowing that their slightest movement in such a direction would instantly produce a conflict.

No match was Dandy Jim's opponent for the Red-Dog giant. By a dextrous twist the Gentile champion upset the Mormon and bore him over to the floor, and then, pressing his brawny knees upon the broad chest of the other, he held him helpless at his mercy.

And the moment that the Gentile fairly got the advantage, with a dextrous hand he drew the weapons of the other from his belt and cast them away.

"Lemme up!" growled the conquered man.

"Oh, no, not by a jug-full!" responded the man-from-Red-Dog; "this hyer circus is jest a-goin' to begin. I've got to argue with you. I hate to do it; but my duty to my country compels me. I reckon that I wasn't put on this hyer jury for nothing! I've got to convince you that you've made a tarnal mistake when you say that Gold Dan is guilty!"

"So he is!" growled the Mormon, sulkily.

Bang! the Red-Dogite's heavy fist descended on the fat nose of the prostrate man, eliciting from him a most fiendish howl.

"Let him up!" yelled the Mormons.

"No, no, let 'em argue the p'int!" the Gentiles responded.

And argue it the man-from-Red-Dog did, the hammered Mormon yelling at every blow.

"Hold on!" he cried at last, unable to stand further punishment.

"Do you gi'n in?"

"Yes—oh, blazes, yes!"

"Is he innocent? Do you vote not guilty?"

"You be—"

"What?"

And the up-raised, ponderous fist of the giant checked the angry speech.

"Do you say not guilty?"

"I—" the beaten Mormon glared at the brawny fist, felt the smart of his bruises and yielded. "Yes, not guilty."

The giant got off the Mormon, and allowed him to get up.

"Now we stand seven to five!" Dandy Jim cried in triumph.

"Ain't the rest of you fellers a-goin' to come over?"

An indignant "No!" came from the lips of the enraged Mormons.

"Send out your next man, then, to argue the p'int!" cried the giant, squaring himself for the conflict. "I'm willing to see the thing through, and to save time I'll take you two little fellows both at once."

Two of the Mormon jurymen were smaller than the rest, and it was these two that the giant had singled out.

The Salt-Lakers looked blank at this bold offer.

"Hold on!" cried one of them; "I ain't no fightin' man, I ain't, and I never heerd of a jury settling sich a thing with their fists."

"Come over then to-once and then thar won't be any need to argue," one of the Gentiles suggested.

Then up popped the head of the barkeeper from behind the counter.

"Gents, I heered of a jury once that settled sich a p'int by a game of keerds."

This suggestion jumped at once with the humor of both the contending parties.

A requisition was at once made upon the barkeeper for the necessary "papers," two champions were chosen, one from each party, and then they proceeded to arrange the conditions; but then there came a difficulty at once. The Mormons contended that if their side won Dan must be brought in guilty, an idea which the Gentiles laughed at, for, as they justly said, they were seven to five, thanks to the one vote that the brawny fists of the Red-Dogite had gained, and they must have that fact taken into account.

A wrangle ensued, which seemed more than likely to end in a free fight, when the deliberations were interrupted by a message from Judge Lynch, wanting to know if they were ever going to come to an understanding, for the crowd were getting impatient.

The Mormon jurymen eagerly seized upon the opportunity to procure a release from their unpleasant situation.

"Oh, no, we'll never agree!"

"Never agree!" echoed the chorus.

"Yes, we will; gi'n us time! I'll fotch 'em to it!" Dandy Jim ejaculated, doubling up his huge fists.

But the Mormons took advantage of the open door to escape.

"No verdict, eh?" said Judge Lynch; "well then, that bu'sts the hull thing. Dan, we'll release you on your own responsibility you're liable to be fotchd up ag'in, you know."

And so the trial ended.

CHAPTER XV.

A PUZZLE.

WITH the announcement of the judge's decision the court broke up and the crowd slowly dispersed.

There were some angry murmurs among the Mormons, but as they looked upon John Clark as a leader, and he made no sign looking toward a conflict, they contented themselves with grumbling among themselves.

The Duke of Corinne was perplexed; he had felt sure that Gold Dan had killed the Mormon and yet the evidence clearly proved him innocent of the deed.

Clark slowly sauntered away to where his horse was tied to a post, his head bent down in meditation. The first blow against Gold Dan had failed, and it had cost too the life of a good stout Mormon; when and where the next, and what should be the nature of the second stroke?

"The fellow must be got out of the way," Clark muttered, as he strode along; "he is a far better man than I thought he was, and if we are not careful he will make us trouble in the future."

As Clark laid his hand upon the lariat by means of which his horse was fastened, a dark figure stole up to his side.

Light as was the footfall it caught the ear of the Danite and he turned quickly, his hand upon his revolver, for the suspicion flashed upon his mind that possibly the secret foe who had laid Googer low might have marked him for a victim.

But at the first glance the Danite recognized the dark form—the Texan, as he called himself—Jules Mercado.

Like a watchful tiger the Texan had hovered on the edge of the throng all through the lynch trial, eagerly waiting for a chance to execute his vengeance upon his foe, but fortune did not favor his purpose, and so his design was frustrated.

"Hello, is that you?" the Mormon queried.

"Yes; you have missed it to-night."

"How so?"

"That fellow killed the man."

"So I think, but I couldn't prove it."

"I know him of old!" the Texan cried, hastily, his eyes flashing wildly. "It was always a common trick of his to carry a derringer in his pocket and fire through the cloth without drawing it; he discharged it with his left hand; he is as good a shot with his left hand as with his right."

"The deuce he is!" the Danite exclaimed, in amazement.

"Well, I never knew that before."

"Oh, I know the man so well—almost as well as I know myself."

"Why, I understood that you were a stranger in these parts."

"And so I am."

"How is it that you know Gold Dan, then?"

"I do not know him under that name but under another."

"I never knew that he was called anything else, and I've known him—not intimately, but well enough to say that I know him—ever since he first came here, about five years ago."

"Five years ago!" exclaimed the Texan, in astonishment.

"Yes."

"And has he been here that long?"

"Oh, yes."

"But not all the time?"

"Pretty much so, excepting of course when he has been off as a guide and scout to some train, but never absent over two or three months at the outside."

"Impossible! there is some mistake about the matter. I knew the man in California about a year ago, lived in the same town with him for over eight months, and he was never absent a week at a time!"

The Danite shook his head.

"Oh, you've made some mistake, for just about the time you mention he got into a scrape down in Salt Lake City and was jailed there for nearly five months—jailed long enough for his opponent, whom he had cut pretty badly with a knife, to get well."

The Texan looked bewildered.

"I am either crazy and have lost my memory, or else there are two Gold Dans!" he exclaimed.

"Well, I never heard of but one and he's enough to have round loose," the Danite replied, in his grim way.

"He killed that man!" the Texan protested, abruptly.

"I think so," and the Danite gathered up the reins of his horse, preparatory to mounting into the saddle.

"What are you going to do about it?"

"Is that a riddle that you're giving me?"

"You are not going to tamely submit to have one of your brothers killed and the slayer go unpunished?"

"An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," is our motto," the Danite answered, "and our elders have a saying, too, that 'he that taketh up the sword shall perish by the sword,' but it must come all in good time; we can't carry matters now with the same high hand that we used to. The Gentiles are too strong, and when we smite them now, they smite back. The fellow has had a fair trial, and we couldn't prove he did the deed. He's a marked man, though, for all of that; he might as well get his coffin ready; he'll need it."

"Clark, either that man or myself must die; we can't breathe the same air and live!" cried the Texan, his eyes blazing, and he trembling all over with nervous excitement.

"Hallo, hallo!" exclaimed the Danite, surveying the speaker in astonishment; "what's come over you? Have you been drinking?"

"No, no! it is fire in my veins, not liquor!" the Texan replied, quickly. "I tell you either this man or I must die. His presence poisons the air for me!"

"You mean Gold Dan?" the Mormon asked, unable to understand the meaning of this strange excitement, and still inclining to the belief that the Texan had been drinking too freely.

"Yes, Gold Dan, as you call him, but I know him under another name—under two other names, and neither one is rightly his own. He has as many names as any horse-thief on the border, and as many lives as a cat, but I've marked him for my prey, and by Heaven, I'll kill him before he is a week older!"

"You had better be careful that he don't kill you," the Danite observed, gravely. "This man is no greenhorn; I'm not in the habit of taking water much, and the time has been when I've run this town, but I'm not over-anxious to tackle this fellow single-handed. I'm not on the look-out for a tombstone at present. We've terribly underrated this man."

"Is he more than mortal, then, that he cannot die?" the Texan cried, in contempt.

"Oh, no, but the man that makes trouble with him might as well make his will beforehand so as to be prepared for accidents."

"Listen to me!" persisted the Texan, in his quick, excitable way. "I know you Mormons well; the Destroying Angels still exist, and report says that you are their chief. This man has defied your laws, tampered with your women and killed one of your brothers; you have decreed his death! I am as sure of it as though I sat in council and heard the sentence. I will take the job off your hands, for I hunger for his blood; his life belongs to me! I have fled from him, put miles of solid earth between us, leagues of rushing water, and yet still he follows me. I will fly no more! I will turn upon and rend him as the hunted slave in the jungle turns upon and slays the bloodhound following without mercy upon his track! All I ask of you is protection! I mean to kill this man secretly if I can, openly if I must; and then, when red-handed I fly, where can I find shelter?"

"Come to my den in the hills," replied the Danite, promptly. "I will keep a horse saddled and bridled always ready for you, day and night. Push right for Salt Lake City. I will attach in-

structions for you to the flap of the saddle, and make arrangements so that you will be provided with fresh horses at the proper places. The password will be 'John Lee,' and once safe at his ranch, in Southern Utah, not even the United States government could reach you!"

"Prepare all, at once, for I shall strike the blow at the first opportunity." And then the Texan glided away.

"The fellow is crazy, but there's method in his madness," Clark muttered.

CHAPTER XVI

A SHREWD SCHEME.

THE setting sun was slowly sinking behind the far-off western peaks to its bed in the great Pacific Ocean.

Its last red rays fell full upon a little group seated by the door of the Bear River Fairy's shanty, that is if two humans can be with correctness termed a group.

Seated upon a projecting boulder, busily engaged in sewing, was the fairy in person, pretty Polly Pickles, while resting upon the sward close by, his arms caressing his legs, with his knees drawn up to meet his chin, was the odd, peculiar old man known far and wide as Old Joe Cripples.

For a long time old Joe had lived in the Bear river region; he had seen the town of Corinne grow from a single house into its present metropolitan dimensions.

We use the word "metropolitan" in its Californian sense, for in that wonderful golden land every thriving mining-camp that promises fair to outstrip its immediate neighbors is termed a metropolis.

And old Joe had always looked the same in the memory of the earliest inhabitant.

Gaunt in stature and thin in flesh, white-haired and gray-bearded; the hair thin and the beard scrubby; the face a peculiar one, the nose broken and curved like an eagle's beak, the small gray eyes deep-sunken in the head and half-hid by projecting eyebrows.

His right leg, misshapen and deformed, at first sight seemed useless, and this infirmity had given him his nickname of Cripples, which had completely swallowed up his own original name, that is if he had ever had any, a fact which he bluntly denied when questioned upon the subject.

"Cripples is my name," he was wont to say when questioned by some inquisitive stranger in regard to the subject. "Old Joe Cripples, an' nothin' else. Ain't it good enough, hey? W'at do I want with another name? Ef it don't suit yer, yer ain't obleeged to use it; so tote yerself somewhar else!"

And all this uttered in a peculiar shrill squeal strangely unlike the usual tones of a human voice.

Cripples was strangely reserved, too, as to where he had come from and how long he had lived in the Bear river valley. As far back as the memory of the oldest Mormons in the neighborhood extended, the men who had followed the lead of the prophet, Brigham Young, across the trackless wilderness, after the bloody business at Nauvoo, to the "promised land" beside the Great Salt Lake, Joe Cripples had existed.

Then as now an old man crippled and living—no one knew how.

But the old man was not half so badly disabled as he pretended to be. When he chose to exert himself he could get over the ground at pretty rapid speed, and keep it up for a considerable distance too; and then, as far as riding was concerned, he was a regular Indian. He owned a sorry little Indian pony, a poor enough beast to look at, and which no sane man would have been willing to give ten dollars for, but like a singed cat the horse was far better than he looked, and was in reality a wonderfully tough little animal.

And so, thanks to the horse, old Joe Cripples was far from being a stay-at-home.

Most people who were acquainted with the old man believed that he was slightly touched in the upper story; if not really crazy, yet not altogether in his right mind; and then, again, there were a few sage men who would shake their heads wisely whenever old Cripples became the subject of conversation, and intimate with considerable force that they believed the old man to be more knave than fool.

And these men who believed this were chiefly Mormons, who suspected evil in the old man because he had no particular way of gaining a living, and yet managed to exist.

And how the girl Polly had come to live with the old man was mystery two.

In the old time during the early settlement of the Salt Lake valley, the old fellow had had no companion, but the girl had appeared during the last ten years, and Cripples, when questioned in regard to her, had bluntly told the questioners to mind their own business; "the gal" was "his'n," and that was enough.

But since the advent of the girl, and her growth to womanhood, it was noticed that the old chap had a great many more visitors than in the past. Men—generally young men with an eye for a pretty girl—would go a mile or two out of their way in order to pass the solitary cabin by the river, and since Polly had set up for a doctress, thanks to the knowledge of herbs and such like simple remedies imparted to her by the old man, she had no reason to complain of lack of patronage.

With his little keen eyes the old man had been intently watching the face of the girl as she bent over her sewing. It was plain that unusual thoughts were in his mind.

"Polly!" cried he, abruptly, in the shrill squeal peculiar to him.

"Yes, granddad," replied the girl; so she generally termed him.

"Wasn't Long John Clark here again to-day?"

The girl looked astonished.

"Why, how did you know that, granddad? You were away."

"Mebbe I was an' mebbe I wasn't," granddad replied, rocking himself to and fro as he spoke. "But, hyer or not hyer, I ginerally have my eyes onto this spot. Don't you know who this John Clark is, gal?"

"Why yes, of course; he's one of the Mormons."

"He's wuss than a Mormon!" cried the old fellow, with vehemence; "he's a dirty hound who sells himself for a Mormon tool. He's the head boss of the Destroying Angels, the Danites, the bloody fiends whose hands are red with the blood of innocent men, and wimen, and leetle children even! When old Brigham crooks his finger at a man and says he must be put out of the way, these hounds do the work; but thar's vengeance a-waitin' fur all of 'em. The vultures up in the pine-trees are w'etting their beaks for Long John Clark. They're hungry for him; they want to tear and rend! He's given 'em many a meal—he an' his bloody band, an' now they want to get at him! Oh! he's big an' strong an' he's the Duke of Corinne, but big as he is an' strong as he is, death will be socked right home to him one of these days!"

"Oh, daddy, I wouldn't talk that way," the girl protested.

She was used to these outbursts of passion against the Mormons, whom the old man hated bitterly, although he seldom expressed his feelings openly.

"I tell yer the vultures 'way up in the tree-tops are a-sharpenin' their claws for him, an' they'll sock it to him 'fore long. What did he want hyer, hey?"

"Oh, he merely stopped to say good-day, and asked if I could give him a bit of salve for a slight cut he had on his hand," the girl replied.

"Ah! the vultures will cut him pooty soon, an' no salve in this hyer world will do him the least bit of good!" old Cripples cried in an angry squeal. "He don't come for no salve, gal; he comes to spy arter me, that's w'at he's arter. Say, didn't he ax any questions?"

"Yes, he asked where you were."

"Aha! I know'd it—I told you so! An' w'at did you say?"

"I told him that you were away."

"An' he axed whar I had gone, hey?"

"Yes, he did."

"I know'd it!" Cripples cried; "that's all he came arter, to spy arter me; an' w'at did you tell him?"

"Why, the truth, daddy, that I didn't know."

"An' then w'at more did he ax you 'bout me, an', gal, you wouldn't betray me, would you?—you wouldn't betray the poor old man w'at brought you up an' took care on you when thar warn't nobody else on this hyer footstool for to even stretch out a hand for to help you?"

The girl was not surprised at this. Cripples was possessed of an idea that he had some important secrets and that everybody who tarried a moment in passing by the shanty had no other purpose but to play the spy on him.

"Why, of course, daddy, I wouldn't say a word to harm you, but he never seemed anyway anxious to find out anything about you."

The sound of a horse's hoofs suddenly interrupted the conversation, and looking down the river they beheld the Mormon elder, Biddeman, approaching.

CHAPTER XVII.

ENTRAPPED.

THE Mormon was mounted on one steed and led another, and from the sweaty hides of both the brutes it was evident that he had ridden hard.

"Talk of the devil," muttered the old man, in a most decidedly uncomplimentary manner as the Mormon elder rode up. It was plain that that individual did not stand very high in old Cripples's estimation.

"Polly, I've got a case for you," said the elder, as he halted before the shanty. "My housekeeper has got the fever bad, and she's raving like a lunatic. I've brought a horse for you, and I want you to come right down and see her; I know that you can cure her if anybody can."

"One of your wives sick, he?" demanded Cripples, very deaf now as he always pretended to be whenever strangers were around.

"No, I hav'n't any wife!" yelled the Mormon, annoyed at the remark. "I hav'n't any wife at all!"

"Oh, the tall one! Lemme see, is she your fourth or fifth wife?" persisted the old man.

"I tell you that I hav'n't any wife!" cried Biddeman, getting red in the face.

"Wa-al, you won't miss one wife when you've got a hull grist on 'em. I remember jes' as well as kin be when you got hitched to the furst one. That was nigh to ten years ago, warn't it, elder? an' I reckon you've got sealed, as you Mormons call it, to a new gal 'bout every year since that time. It 'pears to me you took two gals one year; I don't 'actly remember; but you must have nigh onto a dozen wives now 'stid of five. How many children hev you got onto your ranch, anyway?"

The elder turned away in disgust; he didn't relish this *expose* of his matrimonial affairs.

"This old idiot ought to be put into the lunatic asylum, where he belongs," he muttered.

The girl could not help smiling at the discomfiture of the Mormon, and, woman-like, she could not resist the temptation of giving the elder a sly dig.

"Why, Mr. Biddeman, have you really got twelve wives?" she inquired. "I thought that you said you were not married?"

"I am not, at present," he explained. "I was married about ten years ago; that is what the old man remembers, but the lady has been dead some time now."

"And you hav'n't got eleven other wives?"

"No, my dear!" Biddeman exclaimed, indignantly. "Hav'n't I often told you that you mustn't believe these stories? They are all Gentile lies. The Gentiles can't speak the truth when they talk about us Latter-day Saints; it is a moral impossibility. But come, won't you please hurry? The poor creature was suffering terribly when I came away. My ranch is only about fifteen miles away; we can ride there in no time, and I'll see you safely back home again."

The request was a temptation to the girl; for the last four or five months the Mormon had been a persistent suitor for her favor, and though old Cripples stoutly insisted that the elder was a very much-married man, the "saint" as strongly denied the soft imputation and declared that he was both heart and fancy free, so that she really was piqued to know what was the truth. Not that she cared in the least for the fat and rather ancient elder, but her curiosity was excited to learn the truth.

No thought of danger crossed her mind despite the terrible stories she had heard in regard to the Mormons and their tools, the Danites, the fearful white savages of the Great Salt Lake, a body of men whose atrocious deeds would put to the blush the acts of any red Indians from the Missouri to the Pacific slope.

Here was a chance to solve all doubts, at the same time to ease the suffering woman stretched helpless upon a sick bed.

"I'll be ready in five minutes!" exclaimed the young doctress, and she hurried into the house to dress for the journey and to put up some simple medicines.

There was a shrewd twinkle in the dull, piglike eyes of the Mormon as he watched the door close behind the light figure, and it was with difficulty that he repressed an exultant smile.

The old man had watched him closely, and now, rising from his seat, he hobbled up to him.

"Say, squire, whar air you goin' to take the gal?"

"To my ranch; housekeeper's sick," bawled the elder at the top of his lungs, determined to be understood this time.

"When will she be back?"

"To-night!"

"Sure?"

There was a peculiar ring in the old man's voice as he put the simple question, and the Mormon elder looked at him in astonishment. There was hidden menace in it.

"Well, that depends."

The old man nodded his head to show that he understood, although the elder had not spoken loudly, and he regarded the saint in a way that much excited the astonishment of the elder, for there certainly was a threatening look in the old man's eyes.

"Yes, that depends," the Mormon repeated, just a little absent-minded, for the peculiar look perplexed him.

"'Pends upon w'at?" questioned Cripples, shortly.

"Oh, upon a good many things," the Mormon answered, carelessly. "The sick person may be so low as to require constant care, and in such a case, of course Polly would prefer to stay even for two or three days."

"Yes, I see."

The words were well enough, and old Cripples nodded his head in the most innocent way, but to the Mormon's ideas there was a baleful light in those old eyes.

"So you needn't be alarmed, even if she don't come back right away," the elder continued. "I'll look out for her and see that she comes to no harm."

"All right," and the old man nodded his head again, just as if he was perfectly satisfied; but still there was that steel-like gleam in his deeply sunken eyes. "Yes, it's all right," he repeated. "I shan't worry if she don't come back right away. I ain't afeard of anybody a-harmin' her. She's got one mighty big friend, an' I reckon that even you Mormons, Destroyin' Angels an' all, won't car' to rub ag'in' him."

The elder looked at the speaker in astonishment. He thought the old man had one of his crazy fits coming on. It was commonly believed that old Cripples was out of his head half the time.

"Well, that's good! I'm glad to hear it. Who is this friend you speak of?—yourself, eh?"

"Me!" cried the old chap, in a tone of contempt. "Why I'm just a worm a-crawlin' over the earth!"

"Who is it, then?"

"Her Father that art in heaven!" said Cripples, solemnly, pointing upward with his skinny finger. "Don't try any gum-games onto her, poor little child, or mebbe the Lord will send an angel with a flaming sword fur to right the wrong!" and then the old man hobbled away.

The Mormon watched him while he resumed his former position among the boulders and sunk his head down again between his knees. The elder hardly knew what to make of it. The words affected him strangely, although he tried to laugh them away as the aimless wanderings of a crack-brained old man; but the Mormon, like nearly all ignorant, brutal men, was terribly superstitious, and for a moment it seemed to him as if the warning he had received had come from a supernatural source, and he wavered in his purpose; but even as he debated the question in his mind, Polly came from the shanty equipped for the ride, and the sight of the fresh young girl, perfect in form and lovely in the face, put at once to flight his doubts.

"I'll have her, though I peril hell in the attempt!" he muttered between his firm-set teeth.

"I'm ready. Good-by, granddad!" she exclaimed, advancing toward the horses.

The elder alighted in order to assist her to mount, but with a spring as light and agile as a bird's she sprung into the saddle.

"No need to assist me, elder!" she cried gayly. "I can ride like an Injun, and as well without a saddle as with one!"

"So I see," replied the Mormon, remounting.

"Good-by, granddad!" again exclaimed the girl, waving her hand to the old man as she rode away.

Biddeman also took a glance at Cripples, but the old man did not seem to pay any attention to either of them.

"What a fool I was to allow myself to heed the words of that old idiot!" the elder muttered. "Once in my ranch she's mine past all redemption."

CHAPTER XVIII.

A JEALOUS WOMAN.

THE moment the trial was ended, and Judge Lynch had declared the prisoner to be a free man, there was an eager rush forward on the part of the townsmen to congratulate the borderer. They regarded Gold Dan in the light of a champion. To slay a Mormon—for a great many of them really believed that the plainsman had had some hand in Googer's downfall, despite the evidence to the contrary—was no crime in their eyes. Too long the Mormon bullies, aided by their bravo confederates, the white savages, the terrible Danites, had lorded it over the men of Corinne; but it was plain now that the days of the rule of the Latter-Day Saints had ended. A single man had disputed their power—braved their anger and lived to boast of it.

Foremost among the throng was the giant from Red Dog.

"I know'd it!" he cried, vociferously. "Untold wealth would I hev lavished upon a bet that you would git clear an' be able to grin in the faces of these durned heathens, who gobble all the gals up an' make 'em skeerce in the market, an' we free, native-born white men hev to go without!" And then the giant glared around, eager to discover some Mormon brave willing to dispute his words, but the Saints had already begun to make themselves scarce. They had got the idea into their heads that Corinne wasn't a very *healthy* place for the followers of Prophet Brigham just about that time, and they had not stood upon ceremony, but had mounted their horses and "lit out"—to use the terse westernism.

"I'm very much obliged to you, indeed," the plainsman said, in reply to the many speeches of congratulation so freely bestowed upon him; "a stranger in a strange land—" and then he suddenly hesitated.

"Bully for you!" sung out the Red-Dogite, always ready to applaud.

"And, friends, if you will join me in a social glass at the Castle of Durango, I shall esteem it an honor," the plainsman said, taking a fresh tack, and one that impressed the crowd more than the highest burst of eloquence could have done.

There was an immediate movement in the direction of the Mexican saloon on the part of the crowd, while Gold Dan and the man-from-Red-Dog gracefully brought up the rear.

In the saloon, which was densely crowded, for all the town were quite ready to drink at the expense of the plainsman—or at anybody else's invitation for the matter of that—Dan tossed a gold-piece—"a good solid ten dollars!" as Dandy Jim afterward observed, when describing the events of the night—on the bar, and requested that liquid refreshments be freely dispensed for the benefit of the crowd at large. Then somebody proposed "three cheers for the man that wasn't afeared to stand up ag'in' the Mormon galoots!" The cheers were given with a will, the borderer gracefully pledging the crowd in a glass of champagne. At the time of which we write, champagne flowed as freely almost as beer in all the "first-class" saloons in Corinne, and was sold at the same price—twenty-five cents per glass. Dan now took advantage of the general rush at the bar, and the confusion attending it, to make his escape through a side door.

His absence was soon discovered, and a chorus of regret arose, but the Red-Dogite excused the act by explaining that the plainsman was a good little man, but couldn't hold much fire-water, but as for himself, he, the son of Red Dog's famous town, could set 'em up all night, and he should consider it his duty to represent his friend in his absence, and so the merriment proceeded without abatement.

It was the first time that the Mormon gang had ever been backed down in the streets of Corinne, and the inhabitants felt inclined to celebrate the notable event.

Outside the door Gold Dan came face to face with Katherine of Durango, the Monte Queen, who, through the window, had been watching the scene.

"You had a narrow escape to-night," she observed.

"Yes, but a miss is a good as a mile, you know?"

"It was a strange thing—the death of the Mormon," the girl persisted, surveying Dan searchingly with her brilliant eyes as she spoke.

"Yes, very strange."

"A friend in need is a friend indeed, they say, and surely you can count the hand that fired that shot the hand of a friend, for it came in good time."

The fearless tone in which the girl spoke excited the plainsman's suspicions.

"Do you know who fired the shot?" he asked, abruptly.

"No; how should I?"

"I fancied from your tone that you did."

"No, but *you* surely know."

"Indeed I do not."

"Is that the truth?" Evidently the girl doubted.

"Oh, yes; when you come to know me better you will find that my word is generally to be depended upon," the plainsman replied, in his easy, careless way. "And I do not fully agree with you in regard to the shot being the act of a friend, for the effect of it was to lay me open to the suspicion of having killed the Mormon in an underhand and cowardly manner. As Heaven is my judge, I sought not his life, and even when I faced him, revolver in hand, I did not intend to do him serious injury. I am generally pretty quick on the trigger, and about as good a shot as you can scare up west of the Missouri, although I do say it myself. I reckoned that I could get first fire, and I intended to wing the fellow and disable him, for I wasn't anxious for him to plug me, for these greenhorns do make a mistake once in a while, and succeed in hitting their man."

"I saw where the shot came from!" the Queen exclaimed, abruptly.

"You did? Where was it from?"

"From behind a horse-shed on the opposite side of the way. I happened to glance in that direction at the very instant the shot was fired, and I saw the little puff of white smoke curl upward on the air. I believed that it came from a friend of yours, and so I held my tongue about the matter."

"Well, I'm very much obliged to you for your consideration, but as it has turned out, it was about the worst thing that you could have done. No friend of mine fired that shot, but some secret enemy of the Mormon, who took advantage of the opportunity to wreak safe vengeance upon his foe."

"What became of the Mormon woman that ran away with you?" Katherine questioned, suddenly.

"Upon my soul I don't know! No Mormon woman or any other woman ever ran away with me!"

"Oh, it is useless to deny the truth!" the girl cried, bitterly, "and I was a born fool to believe that you ever cared anything for me."

The plainsman looked surprised. It was quite evident that he was not prepared for this accusation.

"I was a fool to believe it, for I had heard often enough that you were as false and fickle as the wind."

"Ye—yes," the borderer was embarrassed, and no wonder, for it is no joke to face an angry, jealous woman.

"And it is true, too!"

"Oh, no!"

"Oh, yes; you told me that you had lost your heart within the Castle of Durango, and the very next day you ran away with this Mormon woman; and you have changed, too; you are not at all the same man; you look like the old Gold Dan, and talk like him, but you are twenty times his better. What has changed you?"

The plainsman laughed.

"You do not answer."

"How can I? Time changes all things, all men, but as far as regards the Mormon lady, I deny the soft impeachment. The Gold Dan who now addresses you never ran off with any Mormon woman—don't care much for women, anyway, for to him they have ever brought ill-luck."

"And yet, to-night, there was one woman willing to brave all the rage of the Mormons to save or avenge you. If your opponent's ball had struck you, I would have shot him on the spot!"

"Katherine, Katherine!" cried Castana's harsh voice.

"It is my father!" she exclaimed, hastily; "he must not see us together, or it will bring more trouble upon you. Adieu!" and then she hurried into the house, leaving the plainsman considerably astonished.

"In the name of goodness is there anything else that Gold Dan has done?" he cried, as he strode away.

CHAPTER XIX.

A STRANGE WARNING.

STRAIGHT to the shanty which served him for quarters the plainsman proceeded.

On his arrival in town he had sought accommodations at the principal hotel, but the town was crowded with strangers, attracted thither by the near approach of the Iron Horse, and the jovial landlord had tersely said:

"Stranger, we kin eat you but we can't sleep you, unless you're agreeable to taking your blanket and bunking in the entry."

To this the plainsman objected, and a bystander who had overheard the conversation settled the difficulty by saying that he had an unoccupied shanty close at hand, just behind the hotel in fact, and the stranger was welcome to it at a half a dollar a day as long as he choose.

Gold Dan at once planked down a five-dollar gold-piece, and was conducted to the shanty in question.

It was a small building about twelve feet square, roughly constructed, and appearing more like a horse-shed than anything else, but it was water-tight; there was a comfortable bunk in one corner, ingeniously constructed out of sacking and tree-branches; a small chimney in another; a rude table in the center, made of two boards cleated together and nailed securely on two uprights; a couple of kegs for chairs; and to take the shanty and its furnishings all in all, it was far preferable to the narrow apartments of the hotel.

The borderer counted himself a lucky man to secure such good quarters, and like the old Indian-fighter that he was, his first movement after taking possession was to look to the means of offense and defense.

The door was a good, stout one, fastened on the outside by a padlock, and within by stout bolts.

The single window which gave light to the apartment was guarded on the inside by a well-constructed shutter, through the upper part of which half-inch auger-holes had been pierced to afford light when the shutter was closed.

"Strong enough to stand a siege!" the new lodger had ejaculated, after surveying the apartment, but at that time he had little idea of the difficulties ahead, which were so soon to call into play all his skill and resources.

Dan kept a wary eye about him as he walked from the Mexican saloon to his solitary shanty.

"They are not going to let me off quite as easy as this," he murmured, as he strode along, his cocked revolver in his hand, ready for instant action. "The Mormons fully believe I killed the man, and they will try to get even with me in some way.

I may expect a visit from the Danites—the murdering white savages—at any time. How deuced unlucky to tumble at the very beginning into this mess of trouble, while to reach the end I seek, and bring my search to a successful conclusion, I ought to remain in the background unknown and unsuspected; but I had little idea that Gold Dan was so well known in the town of Corinne. If I had suspected it, I should have made sail in quite a different manner. It is too late now, though; I'm in for it, and bear-like must fight my course."

By the time that the plainsman had arrived at this conclusion he had made his way to the door of the shanty. Unlocking the padlock which fastened the door he entered the apartment, taking particular care to fasten the door securely behind him.

"There's no telling but what my Mormon friends may take it into their heads to pay me a visit between this and morning," he muttered, as he shot home the stout bolts, "and I don't want them to find me unprepared for the visit. They're a cowardly set of hounds for all their boasting, or else they would never have let me get off so easily to-night, and it would be just like them to try to quietly assassinate me here during the dark hours."

Through the holes in the shutter a few faint rays of moonlight struggled, and although the feeble light only made the darkness visible as it were, yet the plainsman easily found his way around the room, evidently possessing the cat-like faculty of being able to see in the dark.

Little time it took to prepare for bed, for he turned into the blankets spread upon the bunk clothes and all, merely taking the precaution to remove the revolvers from his belt and lay them down by his side, ready for his hand, and then he essayed to compose himself to slumber.

A light sleeper was the lodger, and he had little fear that any one could be skillful and careful enough to gain an entrance into the room without alarming him. Many a night had he snatched a few winks of sleep, couched on the prairie soil, hostile red-skins hemming him in, eagerly thirsting for his blood, and yet lived to tell of the feat.

Slumber soon visited the couch, and the plainsman slept as sleeps the just and the innocent. But not twenty minutes had passed when through the apartment came a sharp, peculiar sound, more like the hiss of an angry snake than anything else.

In the twinkling of an eye, almost, Gold Dan's senses were on the alert, but he moved not, nor gave a sign that he was not still wrapped in sleep, except that his firm right hand stole down and grasped the butt of one of the revolvers.

Across the darkness of the apartment shot the wavering lines of light that found entrance through the auger-holes in the shutter; they cut the dark like tarnished bands of silver, merely perplexing the eye, not aiding it; but the keen gaze of the plainsman, disdaining the feeble aid of the moonbeams, reached through the gloom to the door, and resting there looked to see the strong planks tremble under the stealthy attack of a desperate but cautious foe.

But the door vibrated not; no sound was there in either earth or air.

The plainsman was puzzled.

"Did I dream it?" he muttered. "If I did it was the first time that my imagination ever played me such a trick."

And then through the apartment again came the peculiar noise; a subdued note designed both to attract attention and impose caution.

"Aha! I am not dreaming!" he muttered; "no imagination this time; but, where on earth does the noise come from and what is the object?"

The sound did not come from the door, but apparently from the extreme end of the room.

"It sounds like a snake, but it comes from a human's lips or I'm out in my calculations," Dan murmured, and then he sat bolt upright on the bunk. "Who's there?" he asked, clearly and cautiously.

"D-a-n-g-e-r."

Slowly the word was whispered, sighed rather, in low and mournful tones, yet as sweet as the plaintive music of the Æolian harp.

"It is a woman, by heaven!" the plainsman declared; "but where is she and who is it, and why does she take this strange method of warning me?"

And then at once his thoughts fled to the pretty Mexican girl, jealous Katherine of Durango, but after a moment's reflection he dismissed the idea, for the voice was utterly unlike hers, yet it sounded familiar to the plainsman's ear, although he had an idea that the speaker was trying to disguise it.

Three or four minutes elapsed; Gold Dan kept silent and listened intently, and then again the strange hissing noise resounded through the narrow confines of the room—a few

moments of silence succeeded, and then followed the mysterious warning:

"D-a-n-g-e-r!"

Gold Dan comprehended the situation now. The hissing was intended to awaken him from his slumbers, and then the single word was to put him on his guard.

A superstitious man might have felt that there was something supernatural in this visitation, but the plainsman was no slave to fear in any shape, and no ghost or gnome had power to shake his nerves.

"Danger—from whom—the Mormons?" he demanded.

"No-o!"

"Who then?"

"A madman—wild with despair!" sung the voice—sweet, oh, how sweet!

Then came a sturdy knock at the door.

CHAPTER XX.

BILLY BUTMAN.

A GOOD rough thump it was, and evidently given by a man's strong fist.

"Hullo!" muttered Dan, communing with himself; "that isn't my mysterious talker; sounds more like a drunken miner, or some railroad-grader out on a spree."

Bang, bang! came the thumps on the door.

"That row will be apt to start my singing friend," Dan observed, and then he raised his voice and cried aloud: "Hullo! who's there?"

"It's me!" replied a hoarse voice, evidently thick with liquor.

"And who is me?"

"Why your old pard, Billy!"

"Billy?"

"Yes, Billy; lemme in!"

"Don't know you—who are you?"

"Billy!" cried the stranger, in a tone of indignant disgust, the voice so thick that the words could hardly be distinguished.

"Don't know any Billies; travel along!"

"Won't you lemme in?"

"Not by a jugfull."

"Blessed if I don't kick the door down!" and then, as if to give due effect to his words, "Billy" gave the door a most tremendous kick.

"Say, young man or old man, whichever you are, just quit that and travel along about your business!" Gold Dan cried (ut good-naturedly. He could not find it in his heart to get angry at a man evidently overcome by liquor.

"Lemme in or I'll kick the blamed old door down!" and then the speaker gave the door another tremendous boot.

"Stop your fooling and go about your business!" the plainsman cried, a little sharply, as if beginning to lose patience.

"Will you lemme in?"

"Of course I won't!"

"Down comes your door, then!"

And then the unknown commenced a most vigorous attack with hands and feet upon the door.

Dan laid back and laughed; he had examined the door pretty carefully and knew that the stout planks would bid defiance to all such puny assaults.

The man banged away for about five minutes and then, apparently tiring, recommenced his supplications.

"Say, lemme in and I won't kick the door down; it's me, Billy, you know, your old pard, Billy Buttman, of Julesburg."

"Don't know you; I'm a stranger here!"

"Oh, get out! you can't play any roots on me!" cried the man in a tone that plainly betrayed how deep was his disgust. "I know you, Johnny, jes' as well as I knows the back o' my hand!"

A sudden idea flashed upon the plainsman; he remembered that the landlord of the hotel had called the man from whom he had rented the shanty by the classic name of Johnny. The mistake under which this guileless stranger labored was plain; he believed that the original Johnny was still in possession of his shanty.

"I'm not Johnny; my name is Dan, Gold Dan, and Johnny's gone to Salt Lake."

"Too thin!" ejaculated the stranger, sententiously. "I knows you by your voice! You can't pull the wool over my eyes. If you don't lemme in I'll smash the tarnal old door down, and I'll whale you like thunder when I git inside—and I kin do it, Johnny, too, for dust!"

Gold Dan's anger began to rise; he was beginning to see that it was useless to attempt to argue with such a fellow; it was only a waste of words.

"If you don't make yourself scarce pretty soon, I'll come out there and whale you, you drunken fool!" he cried.

"Who's drunk?" questioned the man, indignantly.

"Why, you are, you big loafer."

"You're a —"

"Take care or I'll put a revolver-bullet through that door!" cried the plainsman, interrupting the man's offensive speech.

"Are you goin' to lemme in?"

"No, sir;" and the borderer again lay down on his bunk, and prepared to make himself comfortable. "Kick away, and when you succeed in getting in just let me know and I'll come and boot you out!"

Grumbling and cursing the man walked away, and Dan, believing that he had got rid of him, turned his thoughts again to the mysterious warning which he had received in so strange a manner.

"A madman—wild with despair, eh?" he murmured, repeating the words of the warning. "Well, it seems to me that I'm going

to have my hands full of business. First comes my own quest, which is likely to lead me into no end of danger, and then I'm mixed up in this Mormon quarrel and shall probably have to fight about a dozen of these Danites before I get through with them; now comes my mysterious notification that a madman is after me; and then, how many more quarrels in the future am I likely to have sprung upon me for what Gold Dan has done in the past? Altogether the outlook is an extremely brilliant one for business. I shouldn't mind selling out my share in it cheap to any active man who wasn't over-and-above anxious to live."

At this point of the plainsman's meditations he was rudely aroused by a violent shock, which seemed almost to burst the door from its hinges, followed by the fall of a heavy body and the shrill laughter of the drunken Mr. Billy Butman.

"You won't lemme in, eh!" he cried, hoarsely; "well, I reckon that this hyer rock will lemme in arter I've heaved it at the door eight or ten times!"

Again Gold Dan sat bolt upright in his bunk. There is a point where "patience ceases to be a virtue," and the plainsman felt that that point was pretty near at hand.

Mr. Butman had gone and hunted up a good-sized stone and intended to beat in the door with it, and from the violence of the first attempt it was tolerably certain that in time he would succeed in doing it.

"Are you gwine to lemme in?" cried the assailant, evidently preparing for another assault.

"Go 'way, you drunken fool, or I'll come out there and warm you within an inch of your life!" Dan cried in evident rage.

"Oh, you will, will you?" responded Billy with true drunken gravity. "Yes, I think I see you a-doin' of it, so down comes your house!" And then, bang! again came the stone against the door.

Gold Dan swung his feet out of the bunk and rested them on the floor; it was quite evident that two or three more such shocks would play the mischief with the door.

At first the plainsman was inclined to send half-a-dozen revolver-shots through the door, but then he reflected that a stray bullet might hit the drunken fool.

"I'd better give the fellow a gentle pounding and then let him go!" Dan exclaimed, thrusting the revolvers back in his belt and approaching the door.

Again the familiar cry pealed forth:

"Lemme in! air you gwine to lemme in?"

"I'm going to come out and warm you!" the plainsman cried, pugnaciously, undoing the fastenings of the door as he spoke.

"I'm yer meat! come out!" yelled the stranger.

Dan threw open the door, stepped across the threshold, then there was a bright flash, a quick report, the flame singeing the borderer's hair, and down he went headlong to the earth.

The trap had succeeded!

CHAPTER XXI.

THE ELDER UNMASKS.

ALL the way from the hut of old Cripples to the Mormon ranch down by the Great Salt Lake, the elder beguiled the way with cheerful conversation, chiefly laudatory of the Latter-day Saints and derogatory of the Gentiles.

Polly listened almost in silence, only putting a shrewd question now and then—questions which puzzled the elder to answer.

"But you Mormons do have more than one wife, don't you?" she asked, after the elder had finished a long tirade in regard to the Gentile lies about the elect who dwelt in the Mormon land.

"Well, yes," admitted the elder, cautiously, "some of us do have more than one wife, but never unless we are specially commanded by the Lord, through his Prophet, sainted brother Brigham Young, to take another helpmate. You must remember, my dear, how many more women there are in this world than men, and in the usual course of things, as they are arranged in the Gentile world, just see what a host of unfortunate women there are who are never able to get married at all, simply because there are not men enough to go round."

"But, for my part, I should prefer to have no husband at all to sharing him with three or four other wives," Polly said, decidedly.

"Ah, but we never take a second wife unless the first one is perfectly willing; that would be entirely against our principles. Therefore, Polly, if you make up your mind to have me one of these days, you needn't let that trouble you. You will be my first wife, and of course if you should object, I would never take another."

"But ain't you already married?"

"Oh, no, my dear; what put that idea in your head?"

"Why, I heard that you had five or six wives!"

"A Gentile lie, my dear!" cried the elder, warmly. "You really must not believe all you hear about us Mormons; the Gentiles lie about us all they possibly can. It makes them feel sore, my dear, when they come to Utah and behold the holy city that we, the chosen people of the Lord, have built up in the wilderness. They sneer at us, scoff at our religion, and cry out that our gravity and solemn bearing is but a cloak to conceal wicked hearts and evil purposes; but it is no wonder that we are grave—no wonder that we are solemn, for the shadow of Nauvoo is on our souls—Nauvoo, where our first Prophet, the inspired Joseph Smith, was brutally murdered, and that crime has not been avenged, but it will soon be; the North and South are now cutting each other's throats as fast as they can, and on their ruins we will rise a glorious people and possess the land. They drove us forth into the wilderness, but we will return with flaming swords, and the Lord will smite our enemies hip and thigh."

"But it was *not* a Gentile who spoke about your wives," Polly said, shrewdly.

"Not a Gentile!" exclaimed the elder, rather taken aback at this statement. "Who was it, then? Surely not a Mormon?"

"Yes, it was a Mormon!"

"Ah, well, of course there's some evil-minded men among us; there are black-sheep in every flock, you know; but it's a lie, for all that. I refer to the report that I had five or six wives." And the elder spoke truth here, for he had only four. "Who was it that told you about my wives?" and the heavy jaws shut together viciously as he asked the question.

"I don't know as I remember," was the evasive reply.

"Will you allow me to help your memory a little, my dear?" said the Mormon, his voice calm and pleasant, but an ugly look shining in his little eyes. "It was John Clark, wasn't it?"

"I don't remember—exactly," stammered Polly, astonished and confused, for the elder had hit the mark at the first trial.

"Oh, I guess it was! I heard, some time ago, that he was after you and I can understand his lying about me!" the Mormon exclaimed, angrily.

Polly was astonished at this declaration, for black-browed, Long John Clark, the notorious Duke of Corinne, was the last man in the world whom she could believe had taken a fancy to her.

"I've had my eye upon him, for some time!" the elder continued, "and I'll fetch him up with a round turn, one of these days, when he least expects it."

The girl would not have felt the least anxiety in regard to Clark on account of this threat, even if she had been interested in him, which she was not, for the stern, cold man, although he frequently passed her house and generally stopped to speak a few words, seemed to be as far removed from her as the Mormon prophet, great Brigham Young himself.

In truth, she thought that in the event of a quarrel between the Mormon elder and the Duke of Corinne, the burly Salt-Laker would have a hard time of it.

"And this fellow isn't a Mormon, either," the elder continued, finding that the girl kept silence. "He's only a hanger-on, a tool that, in years gone by, we have used to do our dirty work among the Indians; but we'll cut him off pretty soon; he's been talking too freely lately. He thinks, mebbe, that because this railroad is coming we and our religion are played-out; but brother Brigham knows what is what, and he says that it must be a mighty poor religion if one railroad can bust it up!"

The girl had heard this Mormon talk before about "cutting off" this or that obnoxious member. In the old days when the vulgar, ignorant, mountebank Prophet ruled Utah as no living civilized ruler dares to rule his people, a man was cut off from the flock, for ever so small an offense; at order the Danites made short work of him. Few escaped to tell how they had grown tired of the Mormon yoke, and had sought freedom in flight, abandoning all that they had brought into Utah, glad to escape with life alone.

But the approach of the iron-horse had made a serious inroad upon the Prophet's power; the Mormon leaders no longer dared to carry matters with so high a hand as in the old days.

"Yes, yes," continued the elder, "soon we'll cast him out; it's a shame that such a villain should dare to lie about such a man as I am," and as he spoke the elder swelled with conscious pride.

The girl replied not, but in her opinion one John Clark was worth a dozen of the Mormon elder.

At last the two drew rein at the Mormon's ranch.

It was a well-constructed wooden house, square in shape and surrounded with a stout stockade fence.

Being one of the first ranches established outside of the main settlement, it had been constructed for defense as well as shelter, or in the early days the Mormon greatly dreaded trouble with the surrounding Indians.

The elder conducted Polly up-stairs to a room on the second floor, in the rear of the house.

It was quite dark by the time the two reached the ranch, and the girl never suspected anything wrong when the elder conducted her into the apartment, gave her some matches, told her to light the candle upon the table, while he went to prepare the patient.

Polly lit the candle and took a survey of the room. It was a plainly-furnished bed-chamber, and she noticed that the windows were barred by heavy shutters.

A letter, lying upon the table, attracted her attention. Glancing at it she saw that it was addressed to her and signed by the elder's sprawling signature.

Horror-stricken, she read of the fate to which she was doomed.

CHAPTER XXII.

A SPITFIRE.

"MY DEAR POLLY," the letter ran; "there has been a divine revelation vouchsafed to our Prophet, brother Brigham, commanding me to take you to wife and thus seal you to salvation forever. Knowing that you are exposed to Gentile temptation I have taken the liberty of using a simple device to remove you from beyond the reach of the scoffers who mock and revile us Mormons. I trust that you will perceive the glorious future thus provided for you by the will of the Lord, and that with a cheerful heart you will be prepared to submit yourself unto the fate that Heaven has marked out for you."

"Yours in the bonds and trammels of love"

"(Signed)"

GIDEON BIDDEMAN."

With a contemptuous gesture the girl crumpled up this peculiar epistle and cast it down upon the floor.

"The great, ugly, fat brute!" she cried, rage sparkling in her pretty eyes, "he's got me here but if he thinks he is going to marry me whether I am willing or not, he'll find that he is very much mistaken. I'm not a Mormon and I won't submit to any of their nonsense!"

And with this spirited declaration the girl advanced to the door. She had made up her mind to walk boldly out of the

house, but the simple child—she was but little more—had no idea of the strength of the web in which she had been so skillfully immeshed.

The door was fastened securely.

For a moment Polly was frightened; she had not expected this; then she flew to the windows, but the heavy shutters were fixed solid in their places. Flight was not going to be so easy as she had imagined.

"At all events they can't marry me against my will!" she cried, defiantly, "even if they do succeed in keeping me shut up!"

Then she sat down at the table and read the elder's letter over again; her rage growing fiercer and fiercer at every word.

"Oh, the scamp!" she cried, "but I'll pay him up for this!"

One side only of the Mormon's character had Polly seen. She had always thought him to be a dull, well-meaning, good-natured but rather stupid old man; she had yet to learn that Gideon Biddeman could play the tyrant when he chose, and was far more knave than fool.

And now, as Polly sat with angry eyes glaring at the letter, the key turned in the lock, the door opened, and the broad figure of the elder was visible.

Polly sprang to her feet in an instant, and the elder, fearing that the girl would attempt to escape, closed the door behind him quickly, and placed his broad back against it. Then he surveyed the prisoner with a good-natured grin upon his fat face.

"Oh, you monster!" cried Polly in a rage, really at a loss for words wherewith to fitly express the indignation boiling over within her bosom.

"Well, my dear, I fooled you nicely, didn't I?" and the elder chuckled at the idea.

"Come away from that door and let me go home!" Polly cried.

"Home! why you are home now!" the Mormon replied. "Now don't be obstinate, Polly, but listen to reason like a girl of sense."

"Let me out!"

"Oh, no!"

"Take care or I'll scratch you well if you don't let me go."

"Oh, no you won't!" and the elder laughed just as if it were all a joke.

"Why won't I?" demanded Polly, astonished that her threat had not produced more effect.

"Because, my dear, if you act like a naughty child, I shall have to treat you like one; that is, I shall box your ears and send you to bed without any supper."

Polly fairly gasped with rage.

"You won't dare!" she cried.

"Oh, won't I? Well, you just try it and see," he retorted.

"I want you to understand, Mrs. Biddeman that is to be, that I'm not the sort of man to stand any nonsense. Now if you'll be reasonable, and behave yourself, we'll get on as nice as pie, but if you don't, and try to cut up any didoes, I reckon that I'm the man that can bring you down to your fodder!"

"Do you think that I'm going to marry you?" cried Polly, highly exasperated.

"Why, yes, of course; there isn't a doubt about it!" he replied, as coolly as possible. "Do you think that I would have taken all this trouble to bring you here, if I wasn't sure in regard to the subject?"

"Well, I never will, and that's flat!"

"Oh, yes, you will, and that's flatter!" he retorted. "I've tamed just such young heifers as you are before. We Mormons don't fool much with women; we know how to deal with them!"

"You can't make me say yes when I mean no!" she cried.

"I don't care a mountain of cusses whether you say yes or no, or don't open your pretty little mouth," he replied, defiantly. "I reckon we can be jined in silence. Brother Brigham says that I'm to have you, and that just settles the matter; you're my wife now, all right; the Prophet has sealed you to me in spirit, and that's all that is required. You've got to submit, and you'd better do it with a good grace, because if you are any ways ugly or contrary, I'll just have you tied hand and foot, and then you can't help yourself much. I mean business, I do, and now that I've got you here, I ain't going to fool much with you!"

Polly listened like one petrified to these coarse threats; the mask was removed, now, and she saw the Mormon elder in all his deformity.

"Just you make up your mind that you are my heifer and that there ain't any power in this world that kin take you away from here, and then we'll get on first rate!"

"Stay here with you—be your wife!" cried Polly, suddenly recovering her voice; "why I had rather die!"

"Oh, yes, I've heered such talk as that before," the Mormon answered, not at all alarmed by the declaration; "but you'll get over this nonsense before you've been here a week, and then you'll come down to your duty like a good little gal. Why, Polly, I'm going to do the square thing by you; I'm going to rig you out like a princess; there won't be a woman in the Salt Lake valley that'll cut such a shine. All I ask is that you'll be good and try and love your old man a leetle."

"Love! I hate you!" cried Polly, defiantly.

"Oh, you'll get over that," he returned, placidly; "after you've been here a few days, you'll be mighty glad to make up with me. Why, do you know what we do with our wives that are ugly?"

"No, I don't, and I don't care!"

"Oh, but you will care when your turn comes," he replied, significantly; "well, we just turn 'em over to the Injuns; we give 'em to the red-bucks for squaws, and a rough time they have of it, too."

The girl shuddered in every limb. A fate like that was worse than death, to her mind.

The Mormon saw the impression his words had made, and chuckled over it.

"So, Polly, if you don't want to be sent up to the mountains among the reds, just try and make yourself comfortable here. You'll come to love me after a time, I know you will; so you might as well take it cosey now. Scolding and yelling won't do the least bit of good, because when I'm sot I'm sot like a rock, and it would take an earthquake to move me!"

Words were powerless to express Polly's feelings, and so she kept silence and only stared at the speaker.

"I just thought I'd call upon you and kinder ease your mind," the elder exclaimed, preparing to depart; "I was afraid that you might worry; so good-night, dear. Just try and look at the matter in the proper light and I'm quite sure we'll be as happy as a pair of turtle-doves together."

Then the Mormon withdrew, taking care to securely lock the door behind him.

And when she was again alone, Polly's courage deserted her, and sinking upon the bed, she gave way to a flood of tears.

The elder descended the stairs, chuckling to himself.

"I'll fetch her! I'll fetch her sure!" he muttered.

And as he reached the entry below, the front door was thrown open by a strong hand, and John Clark stalked in.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A FREE DISCUSSION.

To say that Biddeman was astonished at the sudden appearance of the Danite chief, would be to mildly describe the man's sensations.

In his haste to secure the girl the Mormon had neglected to fasten the front door, and so the Danite gained an easy entrance.

It was not often that John Clark favored the elder with a visit, and the Mormon, on this occasion, instinctively guessed that the coming of the Duke of Corinne meant mischief.

The face of the Danite was grave, somber, as it always was. Few men in the Salt Lake region had ever seen a smile illuminate the dark face of the Danite chief; but now there was an ugly look in his eyes which the elder had never before seen there.

In the main room of the ranch, which was right off the entry, a candle burned upon the table, and its light dimly illuminated the entry.

"Hullo, John! is that you?" the Saint exclaimed, endeavoring to conceal his annoyance and receive his visitor in a friendly manner.

"Yes; can I have a word with you elder?"

"Certainly; walk right into the room there and help yourself to a chair; there's some prime whisky in the closet; just excuse me for a moment, I'll be right back."

The Danite stalked into the room indicated. There was always something weird and unearthly about John Clark, but to-night he seemed more uncanny and ghost-like than ever.

The elder slipped out into the back-room, drew his revolvers from the holsters which he wore belted to his waist underneath his coat, extracted the old cartridges and slipped new ones in their places, with a hand that trembled with excitement.

"There's going to be trouble," he muttered. "I kin feel it in my bones, and it won't do to have a miss-fire; it might cost me my life!"

Then he put the revolvers back into their places and pulled the holsters well around to the front so as to have them handy.

And even then, "well-fixed" for the coming interview, he hesitated to re-enter the apartment, and no wonder, for few men, either in Utah or on its borders, cared to encounter the Danite chief when the latter was on the war-path.

"I'll kill him!" Biddeman muttered. "I'll kill him just as sure as he crooks his finger at me. No mercy! I'll shoot him down like a dog if he attempts to play the wolf with me! The gal is mine, if that is what he's after, and all the powers of blazes shan't take her from me."

And so, with his courage screwed up to the sticking-point, for the burly elder had a certain amount of bull-dog resolution, Biddeman walked into the main room.

The Danite sat at the table motionless as a statue.

"Have you tried the whisky?" asked the Mormon, seating himself on the other side of the table, with his face to the window.

"No."

"It's in that closet right behind you; get it, won't you? You're nearest."

The Danite did as he was bid and fetched from the closet a bottle of whisky and two glasses. Biddeman took advantage of the turning of Clark's back to draw a revolver from its holster and hide it in his lap under the table; he was determined to be fully prepared.

"Help yourself, John," ordered Biddeman in the true spirit of hospitality, filling out some of the fluid for himself and then pushing the bottle across the table to the Danite.

"No," replied Clark, shoving back the bottle. "I'm like an Arab in some things: I can't eat or drink with a man that a few minutes after I may have to kill."

This was a very peculiar beginning.

"Eh, John, what do you mean?" cried the elder, in alarm, and his fat right hand stole under the table and clutched the butt of his revolver.

"I mean exactly what I say," Clark replied, coldly and deliberately. "I don't want to drink with you because, in the next ten minutes, I may have to kill you."

"Oh, no, you won't!" the Mormon cried, just a little blusteringly. The touch of the revolver-hilt had given him fresh courage; he felt that he had "the drop" on the Danite.

"Oh, yes, I will, if I have to," Clark replied, not a trace of excitement in face, tone, or manner. "Don't flatter yourself, elder, that you have got any advantage over me because you seized upon the opportunity, when my back was turned, of drawing your revolver and hiding it in your lap. I knew what game you were up to when you asked me to get the whisky; but don't flatter yourself that you will gain any advantage over me. Elder, your hand ain't steady, and if it comes to action and you should endeavor to hit me with a snap-shot, the chances are a hundred to one that you'd miss me, because you ain't used to that sort of thing; you ain't been going about for twenty years with your life in your hand, not caring much whether you lived or died, as I have. Why, elder, smart and quick as you think you are, before you could get that revolver out from under the table, raise the hammer, and fire it, I'd slice you all to pieces with my knife!"

The stout Mormon fairly shivered at the words, and yet there was not the least bit of bravado about the tone of the speaker. A dead man, galvanized into unnatural life, could not have been more calm, more cold.

"What's the matter anyway? What have I done to you that we should quarrel?" Biddeman demanded.

"Oh, you know well enough," Clark replied, contemptuously. "A guilty conscience needs no accuser."

"Upon my soul, I don't; I never trod upon your toes, to my knowledge."

"How about the little girl that you have succeeded in tricking away from her home?"

The Mormon elder first grew red, and then pale. Red with anger that the Danite should dare to interfere in the matter, and pale with the thought of the terrible struggle which soon must come, for he was determined not to give up the girl.

"Well, what of her?" he asked, nervously.

"Where is she?"

"How should I know?"

"Gammon!" cried the Danite, contemptuously. "I know your game as well as though I saw you play it. I stopped at the house as I rode by, to-night, and the old man told me that the girl had gone off with you to attend to your sick housekeeper. I knew at once what you were up to, and I determined to follow you at once, for I have made up my mind that you shan't have the girl!"

Again the Saint grew red with rage, and the hand that gripped the revolver under the table fairly trembled with the excitement of resentment.

"And why shan't I—what have you got to do with it? But I understand your game, too, as you call it; you are after the girl yourself; you want her, and that's the reason you interfere!"

"You're quite right, elder; I want her, and that's the reason I interfere," the Danite repeated placidly.

"But do you s'pose I'm going to give her up to you?" Biddeman cried. "Why ain't I got as good a right to her as you, hey?"

"Of course you've got just as good a right, provided she gives it to you."

"I don't understand what you mean?"

"Don't you? Well, I want the girl, if she is willing to come with me of her own free will, not like you who have carried her off by a trick. The girl is in the house now, I suppose; bring her down and let her choose between us. If she takes you, I am content, and will depart in peace."

CHAPTER XXIV.

A SUDDEN BLOW.

It was a fair offer, but Biddeman did not dare to accept, for he felt sure that the girl would not choose him at any rate.

"She's only a child and don't know her own mind!" he exclaimed, sulkily.

"She knows enough not to want to stay with you, if she has any chance to get away."

"And if she should want to go with you, you couldn't keep her!" declared the elder, spitefully.

"Why not?" asked Clark.

"Because, if you take her away from me I'd make the country so hot that it wouldn't hold you. I know a secret regarding the girl that concerns her very life. You know what it is, well enough; I have warned you already about it. I told you that the warning came from Brigham Young, but there I lied, for he knows nothing about the matter. By chance the secret came to me, and I saw that it was too precious to be lightly parted with."

The Danite shook his head.

"I do not understand; you speak in riddles."

"Have you not been warned? Did I not warn you at our last meeting on Antelope island?"

"Something of a warning I remember, but I paid but little heed to it."

"I warned you that you were accused of sheltering—of giving aid to a survivor of the Mountain Meadow massacre."

"Yes; I remember that."

"Suppose the news were brought to Brigham's ears that you were false to the oath you swore, and that you had knowingly assisted one whose testimony in regard to that bloody affair would put the rope around the neck of a dozen prominent Mormons, the president himself included, do you think that the Prophet wouldn't hunt you down even to the ends of the earth?"

The Danite smiled scornfully at the threat.

"Brigham's power is on the wane," he replied; "never, in the future, will he reign in Utah as he has done in the past. The Gentiles are growing stronger and stronger every day, and when the railroad is completed, good-by to Mormon rule! I am not long for this country. They called me Duke of Corinne, in the

old time, and with a rod of iron I ruled the town; that day is over. I shall be off as soon as I can for Southern Utah, down on the Arizonian line. I'm going into mining, and there, in an honest life, try to forget the past."

"Brigham's arm will reach you there easily enough, if I but say the word to put him on the scent."

"Say what word?"

"Why, inform him that you have protected one of the Mountain Meadow survivors."

"But I obeyed the warning, and started the man off at once; nor did I know, when I aided him, that he had been in Utah before. I met him in Lower California, years ago, and he helped me out of a tight place, once; by chance I happened to run across him in Brigham City; he remembered me, although I had forgotten him, and claimed my aid, which I freely furnished, for I've a long memory for either a friend or a foe."

"Oh, you're on a wrong track altogether!" the elder exclaimed. "This man you speak of wasn't the party at all."

"No?"

"Certainly not! Carry back your memory to the time of the Mountain Meadow massacre; don't you remember coming across a white child in a Ute camp, in the Wahsatch range?"

"Yes."

"That child you bought from the Indians, and gave to a white woman in Corinne to bring up."

"Yes; I remember that well enough. I had a suspicion at the time that the child had escaped the massacre, although the Indians denied it; but the woman moved away long ago and took the child with her, and I haven't any idea what has become of either of them."

"Ah, but I have, and I thought you knew; the child is this girl, Polly."

The Danite was surprised at the intelligence.

"It may be true," he said, slowly.

"Oh, I am sure of it, and I have questioned the girl, too; she remembers the massacre well enough, but has sense, gal as she is, to keep a still tongue in her head, and that's the reason, John Clark, why she is not for you."

"And does not the same reason interfere with you, too?"

"Oh, no!" exclaimed Biddeman, quickly. "I am one of the leading men among the Mormons. As my wife of course she will be obliged, for her own and for her children's sake, to keep quiet about what she knows in regard to that affair; a sad mistake it was, too, John, although we did need the emigrants' plunder pretty badly at that time, but I'm afraid that some of us will be brought to book for it some of these days. Now, if you were a regular Mormon—"

"Instead of being merely a Mormon tool!" interrupted Clark, in contempt.

"If you were a Mormon, why, you might stand a chance of getting the girl."

"But as it is, the girl is yours past all redemption, eh?" the Danite asked, in his slow, solemn, measured way.

"That's the way I look at it, John!" and Biddeman gave a defiant shake of the head.

"But not the way I look at it!" and the Danite slowly arose to his feet.

"Eh, what do you mean?"

"Exactly what I told you before! the girl is not for you, excepting that she chooses to remain with you here in this house of her own free will."

"The girl is not in the house!" cried Biddeman, desperately. A contest was at hand and he shrunk from it.

"Oh, don't lie to me, elder; you're only wasting your breath!" was the Danite's contemptuous reminder, and as he spoke he took two steps toward the door.

Biddeman was on his feet in an instant, the revolver glistening in his hand, but in his confusion and anger he had neglected to cock it.

"See here, John Clark, I don't want to kill you!" he cried. "I don't want to have any man's blood upon my hands, but that girl up-stairs belongs to me, and I'll die before I yield her up to any one! Take care, now! I'm desperate, and I'll lay you out colder'n a wedge if you don't quit interfering in this here matter!"

"Oh, she is up-stairs, eh?" and the Danite, turning suddenly, faced the Mormon, his powerful, keen-edged knife glistening in his brawny fist.

"Drop your hand, or I'll cut you into mince-meat!" he cried, sternly.

"Keep back, or I'll fire!" yelled Biddeman, almost beside himself with rage. "You shan't take the gal from me; she's mine, and I'll have your life first!"

Leveling the revolver full at the brawny breast of the Danite, the Mormon pulled the trigger, but as he had neglected to cock the weapon of course no discharge followed.

John Clark's keen eyes had noticed that the hammer was not raised, or else the Mormon would never have pressed the trigger with his finger.

With a single motion, Clark caught the Mormon by the throat and pressed the razor-like point of the keen knife against the skin.

"Drop your weapon, or I'll drive the blade home!" he hissed.

And most assuredly would he have kept his word, had not another hand interposed. A shot echoed through the room, and a groan of mortal agony came from the elder's lips.

CHAPTER XXV.

NOT DEAD YET.

Down, flat on his face, biting the dust like a serpent crushed by a merciless heel, was Gold Dan.

Lured from his shelter by a cunning trick, he had fallen, helpless, into the power of a most cruel foe.

Not Billy Butman, for that crazy fool was but the tool used by the savage assassin.

A tall, dark form, revolver in hand, the hammer drawn back and a nervous finger pressed on the trigger, had but waited for a sight of the plainsman's head to send home the deadly ball.

And then, when Dan was down, apparently sent direct to his long home by the loaded messenger of death, the soul of the assassin was not satisfied—his thirst for vengeance was not quenched.

"Down—down to eternal flames!" the dark murderer cried, his voice shrill and discordant, more like, in sound, the yell of the wild beast, frantic for his prey, than the tones of a human.

And with the words, six more shots the assassin fired at the body of the prostrate man.

The drunken Butman, knocked over flat on his back by the sudden rush forward of the concealed murderer, suddenly took it into his head that he was about to be killed also, and so set up a most dolorous yell.

"Ow, ow, lemme go, pard! help, murder!" he cried, at the top of his lungs.

"Be quiet, you fool!" cried the stranger, and then, to give due force to the caution, he flung the now useless seven-shooter straight at the head of the yelling drunkard, and so true the aim, that the heavy weapon took Butman full in the jaw, eliciting a most tremendous howl, but instead of quieting the unfortunate drunkard the blow only made him call out the louder.

"This fellow will bring the town about my ears!" the assassin cried, "but my work is done until we meet hereafter in the flames of hell!"

And then turning upon his heel he fled.

Twenty paces off, just around the corner of the nearest shanty, a horse was tied, a good-looking, gray animal, and one, too, that evidently could be depended upon to cover many miles in a day with ease and comfort to its rider.

Straight to the steed the assassin ran, vaulted at a bound upon its back—no circus-rider in the world could have mounted more nimbly; with a single slash of the broad-bladed knife which he had drawn from his girdle as he ran, the stranger severed the rope-halter which confined the horse, and giving the steed the spur—these keen instruments of horse-torture were belted to each heel—away at headlong speed he went.

A marvelous rider was this same dark stranger, for he never even stopped to adjust his feet into the stirrups, but rode away without regarding them, sitting in the saddle as though in the instant he had grown to be a part of it.

So might a brave of the Horse-Indians ride, the finest equestrians in the known world, or some Mexican or Southern Californian herdsman, used to the saddle from childhood's days.

In the darkness of the distance the horseman vanished, his flight so speedy, his disappearance so abrupt, that it seemed almost specter-like.

Even the injured Butman forbore to yell, although he did rub his injured jaw woefully, as he watched the horseman's rapid flight.

Strange as it may appear, all this noise—the sharp cracks of the revolver-shots, the yells of the drunkard, and the onward rush of the horseman—excited no commotion in the town whatever.

Not a soul came forward to the scene of action to ascertain the nature of the trouble, but when it is remembered that it is a common custom in the border camps for each man to discharge his fire-arms at night, in order to reload afresh, and it was not at all unusual for drunken men to make night hideous with their howls, or for horsemen to ride at headlong speed through the town, said riders generally being more or less excited by liquor, it is little wonder that the citizens of the town of Corinne rarely bothered their heads to look into the cause of such sounds as had attended the murderous attack upon Gold Dan.

Butman slowly rose, and with unsteady steps staggered over to where the plainsman lay flat on his face.

"Blamed ef he ain't killed the man!" the borderer exclaimed, in horror, "and he sed that it were all a joke, too!"

And then, kneeling by the side of the prostrate form, he turned the body over on its back.

But the bold and hardy adventurer was not dead yet; the fortunate star which sat in his house of life and watched over his fortunes, had not yet paled its light.

From the lips of the supposed dead man came a faint sigh, greatly to the astonishment of the drunken Mr. Butman.

"Wa-all may I be kicked to death by cripples ef he ain't a-gwine to come to!" Butman ejaculated, with true drunken gravity.

Hardly had the words been uttered, when the eyes of Gold Dan unclosed; he blinked for a moment like an owl brought suddenly from the darkness into the light, and then recovering from the stupor produced by the shock, he sat bolt upright and looked around him with a puzzled air.

Keen of wit and quick in instinct as was the plainsman, for a moment he was unable to clearly understand what had happened.

Wonderful as it may appear, Gold Dan had escaped the terrible assault almost unhurt.

The first shot, which had apparently slain him outright, had just grazed the head, bruising the skin and producing temporary insensibility, but doing no greater damage, and of the other six shots, fired in wanton bloodthirstiness at an apparently dead man, only two of the balls had touched the person of the plainsman at all, and those two had merely inflicted slight flesh-wounds, just breaking the skin and drawing the blood, but nothing more. The blind fury of the assassin had proved the salvation of the borderer.

"You ain't dead, by hookey!" Butman cried.

The words—the voice, instantly recalled all that had transpired to the plainsman; his brain became cleared in an instant, as it were, and he was prompt to act.

His revolver was out in a hurry and leveled full at the breast of Butman.

"Now it's my turn!" he cried, grimly.

A howl came instantly from the lips of the drunken fellow.

"Hol' on! don't put a hole through a chap 'fore he 'kin explain!" Butman cried, in terror. "Blest ef I knew w'at he was arter! He sed it was a joke, an' he bet me ten dollars that I didn't dar' to heave rocks at the door thar, an' in course I wasn't a-gwine to be dared by no two-legged man in Corinne, ef this hyer court knows herself, an' she thinks she does!"

"He!" Gold Dan cried; he was quick to comprehend that this man was but a tool in another's hands.

"Yes, the fellow that sed he war an ole side-partner of yourn, an' he sed, too, that arter I got you out we'd all go an' take a drink together."

The plainsman understood the scheme now as well as though he had planned it himself.

"And the moment I did come out the fellow clapped a revolver to my head and fired, eh?"

"You bet!" cried Butman, impressively, "an' then when you tumbled over—I thought your goose was cooked for sure—he jest let you have all the rest of the barrels of his shooting-iron, an' he yelled out that he'd meet you in blazes, some day!"

"Where is he? Which way did he go?" asked Dan, springing to his feet, entirely recovered from the effects of the shock.

"South, on a big gray horse, an' as fast as he could put in the licks!"

"A thousand dollars to a cent that it was one of the Danites!" Dan cried, under his breath, "but I'll hunt him down if the chase leads me clear into Salt-Lake City, and I have to drag him from the altar of the Mormon temple!"

And then, without paying any more attention to the drunken fellow, who was considerably amazed at the strange events of the night, Dan locked the door of his shanty and hurried to the corral of the hotel where his horse was kept.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE PURSUIT.

WITHIN fifteen minutes of the time when the shot had been fired by the masked assassin, which had so nearly ended the career of the bold plainsman, Dan was in the saddle and rode out for Corinne, hot on the trail.

"If it was a Danite—and who else would seek my life—the chances are ten to one that he will head directly for Salt-Lake City," he mused as he rode along. "He has only about fifteen minutes start of me, and the probabilities are that he will not push his animal to its best, for of course he has but little fear of pursuit. He believes that I am done for and will not fear a close chase. It is a good thirty-six miles from here to the Mormon town, and in that distance fifteen minutes, more or less, don't amount to much; besides, it's big odds that he is not so well mounted as I am; few horses from here to the Missouri can out-foot this mare."

And the plainsman spoke with truth, for the horse he bestrode was indeed far superior to the average horse of the frontier, being a long-legged, rangy built mare, formed both for speed and endurance.

Straight southward Dan rode, following the trail leading directly to the Salt-Lake Valley.

Nobly the gallant mare responded to its master's hand and heel and galloped on at race-horse speed.

The rays of the moon lighted up the darkness of the night, so that the narrow trail was easily discerned.

Fully armed was Dan, and amply prepared for the struggle which was sure to follow the overtaking of the stranger who had attempted such a cowardly assassination.

"It will be his life or mine!" Dan muttered, as he rode along, urging his horse to its topmost speed, "and I reckon that the thing will be a heap more even than when he plugged me without warning. That was as narrow a shave as I ever had, but I reckon I'm not fated to die yet awhile."

Ten or twelve miles the plainsman had ridden, pushing his horse forward at its best speed, and for the last few minutes he had listened eagerly to see if he could not catch the sound of flying hoofs. The country was rolling and uneven, so that the trail was rarely visible more than half a mile in advance.

The watch was fruitless; the silence of the night reigned supreme, only broken by the sharp hoof-thumps of the plainsman's mare.

The brow of the borderer clouded with vexation.

"He has either taken another road or else his horse is good enough to win a four-mile race from the best in the country!" he cried aloud.

A hundred yards further on and he came to a level stretch from whence a view of the road could be had for a couple of miles.

Dan rose eagerly in his stirrups the better to scan the road, but he was doomed to disappointment, for not a living thing was in sight.

"I fear that I am on the wrong track," the plainsman exclaimed, reining in his horse, half inclined to give up the chase as fruitless. "Perhaps the scent is a false one, after all?" And then, suddenly, to the mind of Dan came the mysterious warning which had been so strangely conveyed to him. And now when he reflected upon the matter the mystery in part was solved. At the back of the shanty, which was not over six feet from the ground, the chimney of the house was placed, and as the back

of the shanty was banked up to keep out the cold, it would be an easy matter for any one to climb onto the roof and speak down the chimney.

"What was it?" Dan murmured, striving to recall the words of the warning. "A madman, wild with despair, or something of that sort; hang me! if I can make head or tail of this affair, anyhow!"

And as the plainsman was thus irresolutely puzzling over the subject, and debating the matter in his mind, suddenly to his ears came the sound of a horse's hoofs—neither before nor behind him, but on his left hand from amid the thicket which fringed the trail.

Attracted by the sound, and wondering from whence the horseman was riding, for it did not seem possible that one could ride through the tangled recesses of the wood, composed as it was of scrubby oaks, dwarf pines, and other low-growing trees—the keen eyes of the borderer searching for a clue to explain this mystery, discovered that about a hundred yards further on there was a break in the forest wall, and instantly he came to the conclusion that a trail from the eastward led into the main road at that point.

So the puzzle of the horse's hoofs was easily explained. A traveler coming up the side trail was about to enter upon the main road.

Of course the new-comer had no idea that there was another person near at hand, for Dan was now sitting motionless upon his halted steed.

"I wonder if it will be worth while to ask this stranger if he has seen anything of a man on a gray horse?" the plainsman murmured, as he waited for the new-comer to make his appearance.

The man was riding quite rapidly, as could be easily told from the quick succession of hoof-strokes.

Soon into the main trail came the horseman—a man of medium size, dressed roughly after the fashion of the frontier; well-armed, too, for the moonbeams played carelessly upon the bright blade of a keen, broad-bladed knife, thrust sheathless through the strap-belt which girded in his waist, and danced gleefully upon the polished butts of the revolvers belted to his side, and in his hand also the horseman carried another revolver, as though he feared that a struggle for life or death might be forced upon him at any moment.

The moment the eyes of the plainsman fell upon the horseman a thrill passed through his stalwart frame. The man was no stranger to him! He was sure of it, for he had recognized the figure, although the broad-brimmed felt hat which the rider wore low down over his brows completely concealed the face. Though the plainsman felt certain that he knew this man, yet he could not for the life of him tell who he was or where he had encountered him.

The stranger was well mounted—the steed a chestnut in color and an excellent goer.

Dan, now determined to clear up the mystery, put spurs to his horse and galloped onward to overtake the other. Instantly the stranger turned in the saddle.

"Hallo, mister!" cried Dan, as he galloped onward, "have you met a man on a gray horse to-night?"

A yell of agony came from the rider's lips; he reeled in the saddle as though stricken to the heart by a mortal dart.

"Oh, saints in heaven, will nothing kill this man?" he cried; "or is this his spirit fresh from hell and doomed evermore to follow in my track?"

And then, without warning, he let fly his revolver full at the breast of the astonished plainsman, who now comprehended that before him was the man he had been seeking—the assassin who had fled from Corinne, mounted upon a gray horse!

That the fellow had a lair in the thicket hard by, somewhere, and that he had stopped to change horses, Dan guessed, for to that circumstance was due the fact that he had been enabled to come up with his enemy.

Crack, crack, crack! rung out the quick sharp bark of the revolver, a self-cocking tool, and the discharges so close together that they seemed almost like one report.

And under the deadly fire down went both horse and rider. Luck was against the unprepared and unsuspecting Dan.

CHAPTER XXVII.

A MILD TALE.

THE elder was down, mortally hurt. Just a single moan of agony, and then all was over; the ball had struck him square in the temple, just above the nose.

For a moment the Danite chief stared, astonished at the fearful sight—the dreadful work of an unknown foe, for the shot had come from the window, fired by some one concealed in the grounds without. The secret slayer had spared the dark Danite chief and selected the elder as a victim, that was evident.

And yet, without the house, there was not a sign to denote the presence of a living creature, bird, beast, or human.

The Danite turned to the casement and surveyed the grounds without. Twenty paces away was the open stockade gate, left open by the Danite himself on his hurried entrance. Through this the unknown foe had fired the fatal shot, and then had fled.

"Was it a friend or foe?" the dark Danite mused. "If a friend, why did he not wait that I might know whom to thank for the service, for, in truth, this brutal dog meant to kill me, if I interfered in his schemes."

Thus contemptuously did the agent of Mormon vengeance refer to the man now weltering in his gore, who, living, had been one of the "pillars of the church of Zion."

As the Danite gazed upon the ghastly face of the dead man, a strange feeling of terror came stealing over his heart of iron.

There was no mistaking the mark of the bullet. The self-same hand which had laid the burly Googer low, in the street of Corinne, had given his brother Mormon his death-wound! The mark of the big derringer bullet proved that, and then instantly to his mind flashed thoughts of Gold Dan; but if Dan had dealt this blow, why had he not spared the Mormon and taken him, the one he had most to fear?

The Danite glared around him, apparently seeking an answer to the question, and then, out upon the stillness of the night, rung the sounds of a horse's hoofs, urged to topmost speed.

Was the new-comer friend or foe?

A horseman came dashing through the gate, reined up his steed so abruptly that the brute came trembling back upon his haunches, and then threw himself to the ground.

It was the Texan!

And so white—so full of excitement that he seemed like a maniac.

He darted into the house, and, pistol in hand, stood trembling at the door, eagerly listening as if he had been pursued by a score of fiends.

"What's the matter?" asked Clark in his deep-toned voice, so quiet and yet so full of command, advancing as he spoke and laying his broad palm upon the shoulder of the other.

"This man! he is a devil! I cannot kill him!" the breathless, gasping horseman exclaimed, shivering with nervous excitement, and yet evidently feeling the soothing restraint of Clark's powerful will.

"You speak of Gold Dan?"

"Yes."

"You have not killed him, then?"

"Yes, I have killed him twice," the man answered, incoherently, the nervous excitement beginning to subside, and with it the frantic strength which had sustained him so well during the wild scenes of the night. His breath came heavily, and he leaned for support against the door-casement.

"Killed him twice, eh?" the Danite repeated; "why he must have as many lives as a cat."

"Through a trick, I lured him from his house, and then the instant his head appeared without the door, I drove a bullet into his skull at a foot's distance."

"Well, that ought to have settled any ordinary man," Clark observed, in his quiet way, still keeping a close watch with his keen eyes upon the agitated face of the other.

"And then when he fell prostrate at my feet—fell like a log, hewed down by the ax of the chopper—to make my vengeance more certain, I emptied my revolvers into his body."

"And yet he escaped?" Clark exclaimed, jumping to a quick conclusion.

"I tell you I saw him dead at my feet!" the man cried, vehemently, "with no more life in him than is in the raw-hide fastened to yonder saddle, blood gushing from him from a half-dozen wounds, each one big enough to let out a life."

"Oh, then he is dead?" Clark began to believe that the man was either drunk or crazy.

"No, he is not dead, or else if he is dead his spirit haunts me!" the Texan cried, trembling with excitement and his fierce, black eyes rolling in such frenzy that they seemed likely to pop out of his head.

Clark laughed grimly; neither man nor devil could daunt his soul; the first he despised, the second he doubted. He had seen many a stout fellow go down in fierce and bloody fire, fated never to rise again in life, but never a one of them all had ever come back to revisit the glimpses of the moon, to his knowledge.

"After I had slain him," the Texan continued, "after I had given him wounds enough to let out the lives of six men, I flung myself upon my horse, and fled. I rode straight to your den, just as you directed. I found the horse there, as you told me I should. I mounted, and rode straight for this point, according to the instructions fastened to the saddle; but an hour ago, when I turned into the main trail, who should I come face to face with, but this man!"

"With Gold Dan?"

"Yes; unhurt—unharmful!"

"You are sure?"

"Yes; either he it was, or the devil in his likeness."

"And what did you do?"

"Fired six more shots, straight at his heart!"

"Yes!"

"And he fell, all bloody as before."

"And you fled again?"

"Yes."

"Without waiting to see whether your shots had really taken effect or not?"

"I waited for nothing," the man answered, wildly. "I fled; that is all. Wait! you will see his spirit come riding up soon!"

From the wildness of the man's manner, the idea occurred to the Danite that all his story was but the fancy of a disordered brain, and so he resolved to act accordingly.

"I have changed my plans," he said, abruptly. "Instead of going to Salt-Lake I want you to return to my den in the mountains, and keep close there till I come to you."

"I will, but I will not return the way I came," the man replied, with a shudder; "his spirit bars the path!" And then, without more words, he flung himself into the saddle and rode off in the direction of Salt-Lake.

"Poor devil! he's mad!" the Danite exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE SECRET SLAYER AGAIN.

THE Texan had fled at his horse's topmost speed, and the Danite watched his departure in amazement.

"It's no use to send him to Salt Lake as long as he's in this condition," he muttered. "The man is a lunatic beyond a doubt. I don't believe that he's seen Gold Dan at all; in madness he dreams of delusions."

The sound of the hoof-beats of the flying steed died away in the distance, and the Danite dismissed the subject from his mind.

"Now for Polly," he murmured, as he turned and again looked upon the body of the Mormon, slain so mysteriously by the secret assassin.

"Whoever fired the shot did me a service, for Biddeman meant mischief," he mused. "The girl is up-stairs, I suppose. Poor child! it was a narrow escape for her; this fellow would have had no mercy upon her, and to think that for years I have been low and degraded enough to do the dirty work of such rascals as this hound and the rest of his brethren! Bah! I am worse than a red-skin!"

With this contemptuous exclamation, the Danite proceeded to search the ranch in order to discover the prison-place of the girl, which was soon found, and great was the joy of the captive when she looked upon the stern face of the Danite chief.

Man of blood though he was, hated by some and feared by all, yet on this occasion he seemed like a guardian angel to the girl.

"Oh, Mr. Clark, you will take me away from this dreadful place, won't you?" she cried.

"Yes, you are free to depart; no one will attempt to detain you," he answered.

"And Mr. Biddeman?" Polly questioned, with a timid glance around as though she feared the burly Mormon would step forward and attempt to prevent her departure.

"You need have no more fear of him," replied Clark, in his grim way. "He will never trouble anybody any more, in this world."

The girl understood his meaning, and a slight shudder passed over her slender frame.

"And you had to kill him to save me?" she asked, grateful and yet regretful that blood had been shed.

"No, he did not fall by my hand, although as things stood, the chances were that he would either kill me or I him, within ten minutes, when some unknown party settled the matter by shooting the elder through the window."

"And you do not know who it was?"

"No; not the slightest idea, excepting that it was no friend to the Mormons, and perhaps not to me, although, if the party had chosen he might as easily have settled me as the elder, for I was nearest to the window."

"Oh, let me get away from this horrid place!" the girl cried, impulsively, advancing toward the door.

The Danite moved to one side, to allow her to pass.

She paused, irresolutely, in the entry.

"I am afraid to go alone," she said; "will you not come with me?"

"Afraid to go alone, and yet not afraid to trust me?" he asked, his strong voice growing quite soft, and even tender.

Trustfully she extended her hand to him.

"No; I am not at all afraid of you, though men do talk evil of you."

The stern face of the Danite seemed to grow darker and sterner than ever, as he took the little hand of the girl, and conducted her down the stairs.

"The horses are in the corral," he said, as they paused by the open door of the ranch; "within an hour's time, you shall be safe at home."

"Oh, how can I ever repay you for this great kindness!" she exclaimed, in an outburst of gratitude.

"Repay me!" he replied, and his voice seemed to tremble as he spoke; "why, when you hear men speak of John Clark—when you hear him called a villain and a cutthroat, just close your ears and try to remember that, bad as he was, he dared to brave the wrath of the Saints of Utah by rescuing you, a helpless victim, from their hands."

"Why do you stay here?" she cried, abruptly. "This is not the only country in all the world! If you were to go to some far-off land, no one there would know any thing about you; you could begin life anew, and if you haven't done quite right in the past, you can strive to make up for it by doing a great deal of good in the future."

"Polly, your advice is good, and I ought to act upon it," he replied, slowly, "but it's hard work for a man to get out of the traces when once he's fairly in; besides, I haven't got anything to live for, and I might as well die here as anywhere else. There's a tough time ahead for the Mormons, or I'm out in my reckoning. In the future they won't be able to carry matters with the same high hand that they have done in the past. No, Polly, I'll stay here and die in my tracks, with my boots on, as many a better man than me has done."

"Isn't there any thing that will induce you to quit this life and go away?" she asked, earnestly.

And as she put the question, looking eagerly with her big, blue eyes full into the dark-browed face of the Danite, a wild wish came up in the stern heart, which long ago he had believed to be dead to all tender emotions.

"Yes, Polly, one thing would induce me to go away and make a new try for it."

"Oh, go—do go!" she cried, impulsively.

"If I could get a little girl like you, Polly, to go with me—to devote her young life to trying to make a better man of me, why, I'd try the rifle!"

The girl colored in confusion, and yet her embarrassment was not unmixed with joy, for in her heart of hearts she favored this great giant of a man—this terrible Danite chief, Long John Clark, Duke of Corinne,

It was the old story. As the poet says:

"In joining contrasts lieth love's delights,
Hence hands of snow in palms of russet lie;
The form of Hercules affects the sylph's;
And forms that ease the lion's fear-proof heart,
Find their loved lodge in breasts where tremors dwell."

"Polly, what do you say?" the Danite asked; "will you go with me? I'm no Mormon with a dozen wives! In fact, in all my life, I never before saw the woman that was worth two straws to me until you came across my path; but you, why, I've seen you grow up from a child, and I've watched over you as a father would watch over his first-born, and when I heard that this brute of a Mormon had lured you away, I made up my mind to have you back, if it cost a dozen lives. I'm their Mormon dog, but I'm ugly sometimes, and just as apt to bite friend as foe; they know it, too, and there's not one of the Saints, from Brigham downward, but will think twice before he crosses the path of John Clark. Come! say the word, and I'll take you miles and miles away from here! We'll go 'way off over the Rockies to the golden shores of the Pacific; we'll find a home amid the foot-hills, where we can forget the past—forget that we ever knew such a place as this modern Sodom of a Utah!"

"I will go anywhere with you," the girl said, simply and shyly, hiding her face upon his broad breast as she spoke.

"Heaven help me to treat you well, so that you may never have cause to regret this step!" the Danite exclaimed, earnestly, stooping his massive head and touching the forehead of the girl with his lips.

And then, as the soft sound of the caress trembled on the air, there came the sharp, quick bark of a pistol-shot, fired from the extreme end of the entry in the rear; the door suddenly slammed to and the key turned in the lock outside.

A stifled gasp of mortal agony came from the red lips of the girl; her head sunk back, and as quick as the lightning's flash the consciousness came to John Clark that he held a piece of lifeless clay within his arms.

For a moment he stood like one turned into stone, and then a step in the front door seemed to rouse him into action again, and, turning, he faced Gold Dan upon the threshold!

CHAPTER XXIX.

A CLEW AT LAST.

FRAMED in the open doorway appeared the figure of the plainsman, gazing with astonished eyes upon the tragic scene.

Involuntarily the strong right hand of the Danite grasped the butt of his revolver, while at the same time with the other he supported the helpless form of the stricken girl.

But Gold Dan was on the alert; he had been assailed too often lately to permit himself to be again taken at a disadvantage. His revolver was out, and with the shining tube he covered the broad chest of the Danite chief.

"Don't attempt to lift your hand, or I'll drill a hole right through you!" he cried. "I'm not seeking a quarrel, but if it does come, I'll have the first crack!"

The thought of the Danite had been that the plainsman was the author of the mischief done to the girl, but a moment's reflection dispelled the idea. The shot had been fired from the rear, and almost at the same moment that Gold Dan had appeared in the front doorway.

Clearly it was impossible that he could be the secret slayer.

In the mind of the Danite there was not the slightest doubt that the shot had been aimed at his life, but a sudden movement of the girl had baffled the plan, and at a fearful cost.

"Go your way, stranger!" cried Clark; "you and I will never be friends, but at the present moment I seek only the cowardly hound who fired the shot that has resulted so terribly."

"Is she dead, poor child?"

"Alas! I fear so," and big tears stood in the eyes of the stern, strong man.

A convulsive movement unclosed the lips of the stricken girl, and a few words escaped from them.

It was the last effort of life.

"Oh, how could you kill me?" she murmured, and then she whispered a name; so low and faint that it seemed only a sigh, but the quick ears of the Danite caught the sound, and a look of wonder passed over his face.

"Can it be possible?" he murmured. He bent over the girl as though he fain would have questioned her, but it was too late; the spirit had fled, and stern John Clark saw that he held a lifeless form within his arms.

Slowly, and as gently as a mother soothing her first-born, the fierce chief of border war carried the helpless form and deposited it upon the rude settee, which formed part of the furniture of the room, laid the nerveless arms carefully across the swelling bosom, that, but a few short minutes before had beat with joy and hope, and then he turned and faced the plainsman, who still lingered upon the threshold.

"You seek something—what is it?"

"A tall, dark fellow who has twice attempted my life to-night," replied Gold Dan, promptly.

"What have I to do with him?"

"Is he not one of your gang?"

"My gang!" Clark asked, slowly, but with a vacant expression upon his face, which plainly revealed that his thoughts were far away.

"Yes, a Danite."

"Oh, no."

The denial did not convince the plainsman.

"Twice, to-night, have I escaped him almost by a miracle," he said. "He came this way, and I have followed close upon his footsteps. This is a Mormon ranch, and just the place to afford him shelter."

"He is not here."

"But he has been here!"

"Perhaps."

"And where is he now?"

The Danite shook his head.

"If he was one of my gang, as you evidently believe, do you suppose, for a single instant, that I would give you any information in regard to him? I say to you that he is not here—there is no one here beside myself and two lifeless bodies. If you doubt me, search the house; you are welcome to do so, as far as I am concerned. For the present, I do not wish to quarrel with you—I do not wish to quarrel with any mortal soul until I have hunted down the slayer of this poor child, and given him to as cruel a death as the mind of man can invent, and then, after that is accomplished, I'm your meat, or anybody else's."

The plainsman was a little puzzled by the speech; yet it bore truth on the face of it. It was of no use, then, to waste time here, and of little avail to push onward, dismounted as he was, and so he determined to return to Corinne for the present, and there deliberate over a course of action.

"All right! I seek no quarrel except with this fellow who has twice attempted to murder me unawares. The next time we meet, perhaps the chances will be more even, and then if he escapes me I won't complain," and with this speech, Gold Dan turned and strode away, leaving the Danite chief alone with the dead.

Motionless as a statue Clark stood until the sound of the plainsman's step died away in the distance. The Danite seemed like a man stunned by a heavy blow. In truth, it was a terrible shock. For years Clark had led the life of an outcast and a wanderer. Few of womankind had ever attracted his eyes, and they, such as they were, were but toys to amuse a passing hour. But this girl—this child, so young, so innocent, so different from the bold, coarse women, the painted "angels" of the frontier towns, that she seemed like a creature cast in a different mold, had entwined herself around his heart, and now that she was torn suddenly from him, it seemed as if a great piece of his life was gone.

He walked slowly over to her side, and gazed wistfully at the pretty face now cold in death.

"If she had only lived, I might have become a different man," he muttered. "John Clark, the Danite leader—Long John Clark, the Duke of Corinne, would never more have struck terror into the souls of the Gentiles; a simple ranchman, I might have forgotten the old life, and amid my stock have led a new existence. But it was fated not to be. It is my doom, then, that I must still remain the Mormon sword—the destroying angel, the leader of the white savages, until some well-aimed bullet cuts short my thread of life and sends me to join my victims in the other world."

And then, as he stood and gazed with longing eyes upon the girlish face now stiffening in death, thoughts of the man who fired the fatal shot filled his mind; his dark face grew darker still, and a terrible oath came from his lips.

"I'll hunt him down, though all Corinne oppose me!" he cried, fiercely. "But am I sure of my game? I heard the name distinctly from the girl's lips; I think she saw him fire at me, and periled her own life to save mine. He is the secret assassin, then, who has been laying the Mormons low. It is more than possible; he, too, is the miner who has been working the lodes near Bear river, and whom we have driven off. It is plain, now, how he has managed to live all this time, but who would have believed that there was any harm in him? I knew that he hated the Mormons, but I never thought that he would ever do them any mischief. I can understand, now, why he killed Googer. It was Googer who drove him away from his hidden lode, but he's struck his last blow, now; before this time, tomorrow, I will have settled him for this world."

One long, lingering look the stern, dark-browed man took at the cold and silent face, and then, stooping, he kissed the icy lips; the touch sent a chill even to his iron heart.

"I am growing womanish," he muttered, "but I'll have a bloody vengeance for this night's work!"

He closed the house up carefully, so that no strollers could enter, and then hurried away.

Straight to the lair of the Danites, on Antelope island, he went, called together his rough followers and bade them prepare for the war-path.

"Look well to your weapons," the chief of the 'angels' cautioned, "for we may have a hot time before we get through."

"Where-away, Cap?" asked one of the outlaws.

"Corinne, I reckon," Clark replied. "The sharps there carried things with a pretty high hand, the other night, but we mean business this time, and we'll take force enough to wipe out the whole town, if Corinne even so much as crooks a finger at us."

"That's the talk!" cried one of the gang, merrily, and the rest chimed in in assent.

A free fight was meat to these bull-dogs.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE WARNING ANGEL.

At the very same instant that—as related in a previous chapter—drunken Mr. Butman knocked at the door of the shanty occupied by Gold Dan, a slender figure stole away from the back of the building, as though frightened off by the voice.

Perched upon the roof had been the party, taking advantage of the chimney to deliver the ghost-like warning which had so astonished the plainsman.

But not the slightest idea had the warner, frightened away by the approach of the drunken fellow, that the moment of

danger was so near at hand and that the miner was but a tool in the hands of the plainsman's inveterate foe.

Harrying away at a rapid pace, the slight figure soon got out of ear-shot of the shanty, and therefore had no knowledge of the tragic scene which transpired there soon after.

Straight to the shop occupied by the Texan brothers the figure went, entered it, and then removing the dark cloak wrapped so closely around, revealed the person of the lad, Miguel.

A candle burned upon the table. The lad cast himself into a chair, and leaning his arms upon the table, supporting his head thereon, fell into deep reflection.

"He is brave to rashness, and yet as cool in the hour of danger as though water ran in his veins instead of blood. Forewarned is forearmed; I have put him upon his guard, and now it will be impossible to surprise him."

A reasonable supposition this, but the foe of the plainsman possessed the cunning and the craft of Satan himself, and even at the very time the words came from the lips of the speaker, Gold Dan was going down under the deadly fire of the ambushed assassin.

But the lad knew nothing of this, and with the pleasing thought that the timely warning would save the borderer from all harm, dropped gradually off to sleep.

And sound and sweet was the slumber, interrupted at last, just as the first gray light of dawn began to line the eastern skies, by a hurried knocking at the door.

"Open, open! it is I!" the voice of the Texan exclaimed.

The lad made haste to undo the door.

The Texan, pale, haggard, and with eyes that seemed fairly starting from their sockets, staggered into the room.

"Close the door quickly!" he cried, his voice hoarse, his manner full of a strange terror.

"Why, what is the matter?"

"He is after me!"

"Who?"

"Velvet Hand!"

The heart of the listener gave a great leap as the words fell upon his ears.

"But not alive! no, no!" the speaker continued, wildly. "No, he is dead—dead with a dozen bullets in his brain, and yet he follows constantly on my track!"

Miguel looked at the Texan with steadfast eyes; this speech seemed but the ravings of a madman.

The man detected the look, and understood its meaning at once.

"Oh, I'm not mad!" he exclaimed, with a forced laugh. "I haven't lost my senses yet! I mean that the man ought to be dead, for I've put a dozen balls in his carcass to-night, at the least count, but he seems to have as many lives as a cat!"

An angry flush came over the face of the other as he listened to these words, and a lurid light shot from the dark eyes.

"And this is the way you keep your word to me!" the lad cried, indignantly.

"My word to you?" the man said, sullenly.

"Yes."

"What word?"

"Did you not swear on the cross that you would not attempt to harm him?"

"Did I?" the Texan muttered, absently.

"Yes, you took the most solemn oath that a man could take."

"Ah, yes, but I swore that I would not attack him if he did not attack me!" the brother cried, a cunning expression appearing on his dark face. "Do you not remember that? I expressly said that if he attacked me, I should consider myself at liberty to defend myself."

"And did he attack you?" the lad cried, in scorn.

"Yes—a thousand times yes!" the man replied, vehemently. "Has he not followed constantly on our track? Is not *that* attacking me? Would he not kill me on sight, if I allow him to have the chance?"

The lip of the other curled in contempt.

"I have kept my oath, but not as you keep yours!" the lad cried, in heat. "By the bedside of our dying mother I swore that I would follow your fortunes, no matter how desperate they became. She foresaw that a time would come when you would need all the aid and care that fraternal love could give, and so, with a solemn oath, bound me to you. When joy laid fair before me, and all the future seemed bright, you reminded me of my oath, and, in obedience to it, I turned my back upon peace and happiness and followed you, a wanderer through the world. I knew that this man would follow us if he could; he would have been less than man if he had not attempted to do so, and so I sought to bind you with an oath so that there might not be blood between you if you came together."

"And must I not strike when my life is threatened?" cried the Texan, fiercely.

"But your life has not been threatened!"

"How do you know that?"

"Or at least not by him!"

"It has—a hundred times; he has employed men to dog my footsteps, and murder me unawares!"

"You are mad to say so!"

"Oh, yes, I'm mad, but not so mad as not to be able to protect myself!" he retorted. "But come, pack up your things, we must get out of this by daybreak!"

"You are going away?"

"Yes; it isn't safe for me to stay here any longer."

"Why not?"

The Texan looked around him, cautiously, for a moment, as though he were afraid that the very walls had ears and would overhear his words.

"Because his spirit will haunt me as long as I stay in the town," he replied, mysteriously.

The heart of the listener sunk; if this was not all a delusion, the plainsman was dead, but he did not believe that it was so. It was plain that the mind of the Texan was slightly affected; sane he might be upon some points, but evidently he was not capable of reasoning, clearly upon this one.

"How can the spirit of a man who is not dead haunt you?" the other asked, calmly.

"But he ought to be dead," he said, gravely. "I saw him bleed from twenty wounds."

"To-night?"

"To-night?" he repeated, doubtfully; "yes, I think that it was to-night."

And then a moody fit seemed to suddenly seize upon him; he looked around him, vacantly, for a moment, then went and sat down by the table, his eyes glassy, his hands trembling with nervous excitement.

It was evident beyond a doubt that the Texan labored under a disordered brain.

"Drink," he muttered, "give me something to drink."

The other brought a bottle of whisky from the store and a glass, and placed them before the speaker.

Glass after glass of the fiery liquor the man swallowed, tossing off the potent fluid as if it were only so much water.

The bottle was emptied at last, and then for a while he sat, staring vacantly across the room; finally the strong compound overpowered his senses; his head fell upon his breast; his eyes closed, and his breathing became heavy.

The other watched him with anxious eyes until his head sunk down upon the table and sleep claimed him wholly.

Then, with nervous hands, the lad examined the weapons that the Texan wore belted to his side.

Both of the revolvers were empty, and that they had been only recently discharged was plain, for the marks of the smoke were still fresh upon them.

"And have all my efforts been in vain?" the lad cried, wildly. "To save him from possible danger, I have left happiness and hope behind and journeyed through the world with misery for a companion. I cannot believe that it can be true, but if it is, then have I toiled in vain."

Sad picture, that lonely vigil!

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE MEXICAN SIREN.

PRETTY well tired out was Gold Dan when he reached his shanty, just as the morning light was growing strong in the east.

A night of adventure indeed had he passed through, and a pretty unprofitable one; not only had he narrowly escaped death by about as close a shave as it was possible for a man to go through and yet live to tell of it, but he had lost his horse, and such a beast as his was not to be picked up every day on the frontier.

He had lost the mare in saving himself, for, taken utterly by surprise as he had been by the second ferocious attack, not given a chance to draw a weapon, he had only saved himself by adopting the old Indian device of sheltering himself behind the neck of his horse.

It had cost the mare her life, though, and bitterly the plainsman regretted the loss.

"The chances are ten to one, too, that I may never be able to get square with this fellow," he muttered, as he got into his bunk, glad of a chance to rest his tired limbs. "The odds are great that he's safe in Salt Lake City by this time, or maybe on the road to Southern Utah; that's where all these Danites fetch up when the upper country gets too hot to hold them. Of course it is a Danite, although John Clark denied it, but I know better. No one else in this country has got a grudge against me; but this terrible Gold Dan has been interfering so much with the family affairs of the Utah Saints that the very mention of his name is quite sufficient to stir them up like a nest of hornets when a long pole is shoved into their home. I reckon that Gold Dan would have kept out of Corinne if he had had any idea of how well he was known and of the peculiar reputation he had gained—that is, he would if I had had any say in the matter." And with these muttered reflections, the speaker went to sleep.

The sun was high in the heavens when he awoke; little wonder that sleep had claimed him for a good six hours, when the toils and fatigue of the night are considered.

But with the sleep all weariness had vanished, and Gold Dan arose as fresh as a daisy.

"Nine o'clock, by Jove!" the plainsman exclaimed, as he looked at his watch. "I had an idea that it was about twelve. Now then, to proceed on my original programme. I don't believe that it will be of much use to try and hunt up this gentleman who evinced such an interest in my welfare last night, although his person did seem strangely familiar to me, but then I've met with so many chaps of his kidney, since my sojourn in the West, that it isn't wonderful that I should detect a family resemblance. The parties I am in search of are in this town somewhere, I think. They were heading straight in this direction when I lost track of them, but since I've been here I've had my hands so full to attend to the little matters that Gold Dan stirred up when he was last in Corinne, that I've really had no time to attend to the other affair at all. But now I'll take the trail in earnest."

And having come to this resolution, the plainsman started out to get his breakfast.

Upon entering the restaurant attached to that noted establishment, he found that it was bare of customers; the only person present, besides the usual attendant, was the dashing Mexican

beauty, who, seated at one of the tables, was enjoying a cup of chocolate and a roll.

The face of the girl brightened as her eyes fell upon the plainsman, and she beckoned for him to approach.

"Haven't you had any breakfast yet?" she exclaimed. "Naughty boy to stay out all night and then sleep all the morning!"

"Well, I was up about all night," Dan admitted, seating himself at the table opposite to the Mexican girl as he spoke.

"Trying to win a fortune at cards?"

"Oh, no," Dan replied, laughing, "I gave up that idea a long time ago.—Bring me some breakfast; I don't care what it is; any thing you have handy." This was addressed to the waiter who had come to take his order.

"Some Mormon lady claimed your attention, then?" the senora queried, a spice of jealousy apparent in the speech.

"Oh, no; whatever Gold Dan may have done in that line in the past, he won't trouble the Mormon Saints to look after their helpmates in the future."

"Where were you, then?" the girl asked abruptly. "You see that I am anxious, like all my sex, and I use a woman's privilege to ask questions—impudent ones, perhaps?"

"Not in this case," Dan answered. "I've not the least objection to telling you. I was in the saddle about all night long in chase of a gentleman who took such an interest in the town of Corinne that he tried to favor the inhabitants with a first-class funeral."

"Some one attempted your life!" the girl cried, quickly, the deep interest she took being plainly apparent both in her voice and manner.

"Yes."

"The Danites?"

"That is more than I can tell."

"You did not recognize the parties, then?"

"There was only one, and though his person seemed familiar to me, yet for the life of me I can't place him."

"And he escaped you?"

"Yes."

Just at this point of the conversation the waiter brought the breakfast, and the plainsman proceeded at once to dispatch it.

The girl watched him for a few minutes in silence, a peculiar expression upon her face.

"Why do you come here to Corinne and call yourself Gold Dan?" she exclaimed, abruptly.

The plainsman laughed, between the swallows of coffee he was taking, and seemed to regard the question as a joke.

"Why do I call myself Gold Dan?" he answered; "well, what else should I call myself?"

"Any thing but that, for it is not your name."

"Oh, isn't it?"

"You know that it isn't!"

"Well, we're not particular as to names in this region, you know," Dan replied, helping himself to a bit of the steak as he spoke, which was fearfully and wonderfully fried.

"Ah, yes; but *why* do you take another man's name?"

"Another man's name?"

"Yes; and so, too, take up another man's quarrels?"

"Oh, but I don't, do I?"

"Certainly you do. Did you not face Googer, the Mormon, and what had you to do with his wife?"

"That is exactly what I tried to tell him, but he wouldn't listen to it. He talked about his Mary Jane, and I never even saw the woman!"

"That was because he believed that you were Gold Dan."

"Oh, yes; I understand that."

"But you are not Gold Dan."

"Well, who am I, then?"

"Ah! that is more than I can tell," the girl replied, with a shake of the head; "I, too, was a fool like the rest. You do look a great deal like the man who used to be here in Corinne, and who was called Gold Dan; you have on his clothes; I will swear to them."

"Now listen to me," said the plainsman, balancing a piece of meat reflectively on the end of his fork. "The first house I entered in Corinne was this one; the moment I crossed the threshold there was a general cry of 'Gold Dan!' Every one recognized me—every one knew me. How could I deny my identity? I will own frankly, though, to you, that if I had had the remotest idea that the old Gold Dan had been such a deuce of a fellow, and had got into so many scrapes in the old time in Corinne, I should have tried very hard to have convinced the town of Corinne that I was not Gold Dan."

"You have some purpose in coming here in disguise," the girl said, abruptly.

"I am too polite to contradict a lady," he replied, laughing.

"And to carry out that purpose you wished to disguise your identity."

"A man might do such a thing."

"The report of the death of Gold Dan by the hands of the redskins, was true. You came along immediately afterward; you noticed the resemblance that existed between the dead man and yourself, and resolved to profit by it. You dressed yourself in his clothes, and then came on to Corinne, but you had no idea that you were going to strike a town where Gold Dan was so well known."

"You're a regular fortune-teller."

CHAPTER XXXII.

AN ADVANCE IN FORCE.

THE clatter of horses' hoofs, without in the street, interrupted the conversation just at this point.

Both Gold Dan and the Mexican girl listened, somewhat at a loss to account for the noise.

From the sounds one would be apt to imagine that a whole regiment of cavalry was prancing by in the street.

"Hullo, what's that—soldiers?" the plainsman queried.

"That is what it sounds like," and as she spoke the girl rose from her seat and advanced toward the window, with the intent of seeing the cause of the unusual sounds.

But before Kate had taken three steps across the room, the door of the saloon was thrown open suddenly, and the Mexican host of the Castle of Durango, Michael Castana, rushed into the apartment, evidently much excited.

He closed the door behind him, and uttered a guttural exclamation as his eyes fell upon the person of Gold Dan.

"Aha! I thought so!" he cried, hastily. "*Caramba!* I knew it the moment I saw them! Fly at once!" and with these words, Castana rushed to the rear door of the saloon and flung it open.

The plainsman watched him in astonishment.

"Fly, fly; there is no time to lose!" the Mexican cried.

"Fly!"

"Yes; you have not a moment to lose!"

"Why the deuce should I fly?"

"Your life would not be worth a moment's purchase, if they discover that you are here!"

"They—who?"

"The Mormons—the Danites, and John Clark is at their head!"

By this time Kate had reached the window, and, looking forth upon the street, saw that her father's words were only too true.

"Yes, yes!" she exclaimed, in haste. "It is John Clark, and all his Destroying Angels with him—fifty, at the least!"

The plainsman did not seem to be very much alarmed. He drew his revolvers, and glanced at the charges carefully, placed them upon the table before him, and then began to pick his teeth, unceremoniously, with a straw, which had been lying upon the table, a waif from the brush-broom used by the waiter to remove the crumbs.

"Oh, oh!" cried Michael Castana, in profound amazement, as he looked upon this man of ice, "will you stay here to be murdered in cold blood?"

"Can I make any thing by attempting to fly?" Gold Dan asked, quietly, answering one question by asking another, after the fashion of a Yankee lad.

"But they will kill you, sure, if they find you here!" Castana exclaimed. "They are armed, every man of them, and they have force enough to sweep the town. It is madness to remain here!"

"And madness to attempt to escape by flight, if they are really after me and bound to have my scalp. They are mounted, and I am not, and if they mean business, and John Clark is half the man he is reported to be, the chances are a hundred to one that the house is closely surrounded on all sides—that is, if he knows that I am here."

"The house does seem surrounded," the girl added, scanning the situation without, eagerly, from her post at the window.

"There is nothing to be gained by attempting to fly," Gold Dan observed, discussing the matter as coolly as though his life or death did not tremble in the balance. "Here I have the advantage of fortifications. My seven-shooters are good for twenty-eight lives, if every bullet tells, and as I've had some experience in this sort of thing before, I won't be apt to waste many shots. If it is to be a struggle for life, I'll sell it as dearly as possible, and these Danites are better men than I take them to be, if they push the attack after I've dropped five or six of the boldest of them."

This bold and calculating fellow never seemed to think that, by any possibility, he could be hit.

Both of the Mexicans gazed at the plainsman in wonder. What manner of man was this, who not only proposed, single-handed, to face fifty men, but even believed that he would prove the conqueror in the fight?

Ah! there have been giants in valor in our wild western land! Heroes as great as those old-time "sharps," whose praises blind Homer has sung in deathless verse!

"It is madness; fly, fly!" Castana urged, almost unable to believe that he had heard rightly.

"Oh, no; I know my game, and I'll play it with a bold hand," the plainsman replied, in his easy way, rising as he spoke and sitting carelessly on the edge of the table. "I'll die, if die I must, game to the last, and if I am doomed to the happy hunting-grounds, the way won't be so lonesome, nor the journey seem so long, if I have John Clark and a half-a-dozen of his Destroying Angels to keep me company. Besides, do you think that the men of Corinne are going to stand idly by and see me butchered in cold blood? Not much!"

The Mexican shook his head.

"Oh, there are too many of them, and all the railroad men are away attending to their work. It will take a bold man to face the Danites in your behalf."

But bold men there were in the town that morning. It is a trite saying, and generally proves true, that when great emergencies arise, the man comes forward to meet them, and in this case hardly had the words left the Mexican's lips, when the side-door of the saloon was opened abruptly, and a shock-haired, huge-bearded head, surmounted by a frightful bad hat, was protruded into the apartment.

"I know'd it!" the owner of the head cried. "I would have bet all the rocks from hyer to the gay old town of Cinnabar onto it! Pard, they air after you; tooth and toe-nails, the Mormon galoots! Cavortin' in the squar', air they, an' I

s'picioned that an antelope 'bout your size was meat they were a-sp'illin' for. I heerd that you were in hyer, and I've jist passed the word around town, and though, mebber, we won't be able to count noses with the cusses, yet we'll gi'n 'em a lively tussle for their money!"

And then the Red-Dog giant marched himself into the room, and those within noticed that he fairly bristled with weapons.

Such a reinforcement was not to be despised.

Search the annals of the wild western border, and not one, but a dozen instances will the seeker after knowledge find, when one or two men, armed with desperation and nerved by the thought that almost certain death stared them in the face, have confronted a host, and not only baffled the murderous attack, but severely punished the assailants.

All noise without had ceased, and the Mexican girl at the window, with anxious eyes, watched the movements of the Mormons.

The force of the Danites had been somewhat overestimated; there were not fifty men in the party, but there were at least thirty, beside the leader, Long John Clark—each and every man armed to the teeth; revolvers belted to their sides, broad-bladed knives thrust sheathless through their leather belts, and some few of them carried rifles slung over their shoulders.

The coming of the Danites had been entirely unexpected. They had ridden at a gallop into town, halted right in the center of Corinne, just before the door of the Castle of Durango, dispatched six men to hold the upper entrance to the town, just as they had already left behind them six more to guard the lower road.

There was no mistaking the meaning of these ominous preparations. The Mormons meant business!

Attracted by the unusual sight, the good folks of the town began to gather timidly in the street and stare at the fierce armed men, but all kept prudently near their doors. They realized that the Danites came with bloody intent. A conflict might begin at any moment, and stray bullets are no respecters of persons.

That the Mormons came in search of Gold Dan, was the natural thought of all who had witnessed the exciting scenes which had transpired on the night when the Mormon, Googer, had perished by the hand of the secret assassin, and therefore all the more reckless spirits of the town, the bold souls who chafed under the stern Mormon rule, began to feel of their weapons and to wonder what show they stood if it came to a hand-to-hand encounter with the Destroying Angels.

The burly Red-Dogite fairly represented the sentiments of many a rough fellow in the town of Corinne that day, when he declared his readiness to stand by Gold Dan unto the last extremity.

With the advent of the railroad men and their satellites into the town, the spirit of resistance to the Mormons had deepened and widened much, and now, on this occasion, although the Danites were out in strong force, more than one bold Gentile felt inclined to risk a quarrel with them so that the question might be fairly decided whether Corinne was Mormon or Gentile.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

THE SECRET SLAYER.

"WHAT are they doing?" Dan asked, after the entrance of the man-from-Red-Dog, taking up his revolvers which he had placed upon the table and approaching the window where the girl stood.

"Sitting motionless upon their horses—looking about them; that is all," Kate answered.

The three men approached the window so that they could command a view of the street, and yet not near enough to expose themselves to the gaze of the Mormons.

As the girl had said, the invading band were sitting quietly upon their steeds in the center of the street, merely looking vacantly about them as though no business of moment had brought them thus armed and equipped into the town of Corinne.

"Pardner, they hev got their weather-eye open for you, the tarnal Turks!" the man-from-Red-Dog exclaimed, in a hoarse whisper in the ear of the plainsman.

And the Mexican was also of this belief, for he nodded his head significantly.

But the Danites were keeping a wary eye about them, for all of their seeming carelessness, and the appearance of a single man upon the street, in addition to the crowd already attracted by the unusual sight, was the signal for instant action.

"There he is!" said the Danite chief, in his deep voice; "go for him, boys!"

And at the command, two men separated themselves from the rest, dismounted from their horses, and suddenly laid hold of old Joe Cripples, who had just made his appearance from the door of a small saloon situated right opposite to the Castle of Durango.

This action astonished the lookers on, who couldn't, for the life of them, imagine in what way the harmless old man had injured the Mormons.

Despite the angry cries of Cripples, the two Danites dragged him up to John Clark, and the dark instrument of Mormon vengeance surveyed him with a look that was full of fearful menace.

"Lemme go! What are ye 'bout?" Cripples cried, struggling, helpless as a child, in the iron gripe of his captors.

"What on earth do they want with the old man?" Gold Dan cried, in amazement. "I really must go outside; I reckon that they are not after me after all."

"I'm with you, pard!" the Red-Dogite cried.

"And I'll watch you from an upper window!" the Mexican

girl exclaimed, her cheeks burning with excitement. "I am as good a shot as any man in Corinne, and if they do kill you, you shall not die unavenged!"

Gold Dan thanked the impulsive girl with a smile, and passing through the door, joined the little crowd of townsmen gathered without; the Red-Dog giant followed close behind, while Castana brought up the rear.

"What are you a-doin', anyway?" the old man cried. "I never did nothin' to you!"

"Search him!" was John Clark's unexpected order.

But a most vigorous resistance the old man made to this, displaying a strength that few would have supposed dwelt within his feeble frame.

Cries of "Shame!" "Shame!" "Let the old man alone!" went up on the air.

And Gold Dan, taking that leadership which seemed so natural to him, stepped boldly forward and protested against the treatment that the old man was receiving.

"This is a high-handed proceeding!" he cried. "How long since is it that you Mormon chaps have taken upon yourselves the right to seize a man in the streets of Corinne at your own sweet will?"

"It makes my blood bile when I see *sich* a deal!" the irrepressible man-from-Red-Dog howled, at the top of his lungs. "If you want fun, let some two or three of you much-married galoots come and s'arch *me*! I'm your antelope, for stamps, you bet!"

"Gold Dan, you are the last man in this town who should raise your voice against this proceeding," the Danite chief responded, in his loud, deep voice, which resounded plainly throughout the town, although he made no effort to make himself heard.

This announcement took all by surprise, for not a man within sound of the Danite's voice could possibly imagine what connection there could be between the plainsman and the old cripple.

"Well, I don't understand how that can be!" the plainsman said in some surprise.

"A few words will explain," the Danite replied. "Only a short time ago, on this very spot, I accused you of the murder of Bellman Googer, and if I had had my way at the time, your shade would be roaming in the other world long before this."

"I haven't the least doubt of it," Gold Dan observed, dryly.

"And if I had succeeded in my design and had killed you in revenge for Googer's death, it would have been a foul murder, for you are innocent of all knowledge of the deed."

This announcement astounded the listeners, and each man looked at his neighbor as if wondering what was to come next.

"You are an innocent man," Clark continued, "as innocent of Googer's murder as a child unborn. This miserable wretch here is the guilty man!" and the Danite pointed with outstretched finger at the old man, who was still struggling in the clutches of the two Mormons, and endeavoring to prevent them from searching him. But the brace of stout fellows were too much for him, and one of them, diving his hand into a secret pocket, fashioned in the lining of the old man's coat, produced a pair of derringier pistols, which he held up to view.

Clark instantly spurred his horse forward, and seized the pistols.

The old man turned deadly pale, but still continued to struggle violently.

"Here is the proof!" the Danite chief cried. "Googer was killed by the ball which would fit only such pistols as these. This man took advantage of the quarrel in which Googer was engaged to fire at him from behind the cover of some shanty, rightly thinking that in the confusion and under the circumstances all would believe that you, Gold Dan, fired the shot."

"Tain't so! it's a lie! 'tain't no *sich* thing!" the old man cried. "Why should I kill him?"

"Why!" cried Clark, in a voice of thunder, "because you were the man who was secretly working the hidden lodes near Bear river, and Googer, acting under orders from Salt Lake, had repeatedly driven you off. You thought that the secret of the mine was known only to you and him, and that if you got him out of the way you would not be troubled any more. And you are the mean, miserable wretch who revealed to the Mormon elders at Salt Lake that the girl who took care of you—who was sacrificing all her young life for your worthless sake—was one of the rescued victims of the Mountain Meadows massacre."

"Tain't so! I don't know nothin' 'bout it!" the old man protested, big drops of sweat standing upon his brow and every fiber within his body trembling as he saw the coil of circumstantial evidence closing so tightly around him.

"It is the truth!—you know it is the truth!" the Danite chief cried. "You were afraid that the girl would betray the secret of the mine, and so you attempted to sacrifice her."

"No, no; I only wanted to skear you away; I knew that you was arter the gal, and I thought that if I told on you the head devils at Salt Lake would fix you," Cripples cried, making a virtue of necessity, and stammering out this partial confession.

"Oh! John Clark is the Mormon's dog, but he's dangerous even to the men that own him!" the Danite returned, bitterly. "You made up your mind to kill all of us. You settled Googer, plugged Biddeman, and would have winged me, but for the girl. You sent her to heaven, and now prepare yourself for a journey to the other place."

"Oh, mercy! 'tain't the truth! Would you murder me in cold blood?" the miserable old man shrieked, in abject terror.

In reality, it did seem like a mockery of justice to call this trembling old wretch to an account. It was plain that he was partially demented, and then, too, more than one in the crowd doubted the truth of the charges.

"You shall die by a bullet from one of your own weapons!" the Danite cried; his keen eyes had, upon the first examination, detected that both of the pistols were loaded.

"Hold on! give the man a trial! you've no right to kill him in cold blood!" Gold Dan exclaimed.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

CLARK'S VENGEANCE.

"No right, eh?" the Danite chief sneered.

"No, not without a trial," the plainsman responded, boldly; "give the man a chance for his life!"

"Yes, that's the talk—give the old cuss a show for his white alley!" the ever-vociferous Red-Dogite insisted.

And then the bystanders took up the word.

"Yes, yes, a trial—give the old man a chance!"

The Danite chief smiled darkly, as he listened to the earnest words, and the fear-stricken old man, looking into his stern face, understood that he could expect no mercy from his hands.

"What more trial do you want than the one he has already had?" Clark demanded, in scorn. "Why, he almost owns up to the whole thing!"

"No, no; I don't!" demurred old Cripples, wild with terror.

"I didn't understand it that way!" Gold Dan averred. "He admitted that he gave the information that you spoke about, but I didn't understand him to admit that he did any killing."

"No more did he nuther!" howled the man-from-Red-Dog, now greatly excited, "an' the man wot says he did, is a left-handed p'ison-h'ister, an' I kin whale him for the drinks for the crowd!"

The bold stand taken by the two men encouraged the rest of the townsmen to protest, and as by this time there were some forty to fifty people on the ground, attracted by the scene, the Corinne men felt tolerably strong. But, though the townsmen had the advantage in numbers, the Danites were by far the most formidable body of the two, as they were all united and prepared for action.

"He has been tried—fully tried and found guilty!" Clark announced, sternly. "Here are the pistols with which the murders were committed. Googer was killed by a big ball; you ought to remember it well enough, Gold Dan, for that fact saved you when you were accused of the deed. Here is the ball, now," and the Danite took the leaden instrument of death from his pocket. "Any one with half an eye can see that it fits the pistol."

And in truth there was really no doubt about this.

"And we found the pistols concealed on this miserable old wretch; what better proof do you want?"

"I found them, this morning, comin' to town!" Cripples cried, clinging like a drowning man to every straw, in order to avert the doom which seemed so terribly near.

"Oh, yes; we know all about that!" the Danite chief replied, in bitter sarcasm.

"But the old man may not be in his right mind," urged Dan, and in truth this did seem to be the case.

"We don't split hairs here on the frontier!" Clark suggested, bluntly. "Mad or not, he did the deeds and must answer for them. Come, prepare!"

And then, at a signal from Clark, the Mormons began to bind the arms of the old man.

In a second, Gold Dan's revolvers were out, the hammers raised, and their polished muzzles leveled full at the Mormons who held the old man.

"Hold on, there! You shan't kill him without trial!" and the plainsman was in dead earnest, now.

"A trial, or blood!" Dandy Jim yelled, also flourishing his weapons.

"Yes, yes; a trial—a fair trial!" the by-standers shouted.

"A fair trial, eh?" and the Danite chief glared grimly around upon the crowd.

"That's all we ask!" Dan replied.

"The clean white thing, and no mistake!" the giant cried.

"And nothing else will satisfy you?"

"No, nothing else. If the man is really guilty, and is proved so, why we'll attend to his punishment."

"Yes, sir-ee; we'll hang him up like a string of sassingers!" the Red-Dog man added.

"A fair trial," the Danite repeated, slowly, and his fingers played restlessly with one of the pistols which he held in his right hand.

"That's all we ask; he shall have justice!"

"Justice! That's correct. Release him!" This command was addressed to the two Mormons who still held the old man secure in their grasp.

Sullenly the two men dropped their hold of the prisoner, and stepped back a pace.

For a moment, the men of Corinne took a long breath; it was the first time, in the history of the town, that the Gentiles had ever dared to step between the terrible Destroying Angels—the fearful White Savages of the Great Salt Lake—and their prey.

The moment the two ruffians released their hold of the old man, Cripples fell upon his knees; the struggle had weakened him.

And then there came a sudden, sharp crack—a sound that the town of Corinne knew only too well; a yell of agony came from the lips of old Cripples, and then he fell forward upon his face, writhing in the agonies of death.

The dark Danite leader was not to be cheated of his vengeance; with the weapon of the secret slayer he had driven a ball straight to the heart of the old man.

"Now try him as much as you like; I'm satisfied!" the Danite cried, with a scornful laugh.

The suddenness of the unexpected act took all by surprise; and almost before the defiant words had been fairly spoken by the leader of the White Savages, the old man was dead.

Clark gave a signal to his men, and turning their steeds, the Mormons rode slowly out of the town, scowling contemptuously upon the enraged townsmen as they rode by them.

Not a hand was lifted to detain them; for the moment the bold act awed the townsmen, but after the departure of the Danites the anger of the citizens broke out.

"We've stood this hyer thing too long!" cried one old gray-bearded man; the same, by the way, who presented so bold a front to the Mormons on the night of Gold Dan's trial. "I don't car' two pins whether the man was guilty or not; he hadn't ought to be killed without a fair trial."

"Oh, the Mormons own this hyer hull town!" announced the man-from-Red-Dog, in a tone of contempt.

A dozen were quick to resent this insult, and for a few moments there seemed to be a strong probability of an extremely lively free fight occurring.

"Take that back!" cried one of the men of Corinne, indignant at the insult.

"Take it back, or we'll—"

"Take nothin' back!" cried Dandy Jim, loftily, doubling up his huge fists and preparing for war. "It's a sure-enough fact! In Californy, whar I come from, the men of Red Dog would have waltzed right into any sich ornery crowds as these hyer Mormon bucks, and whaled thunder and lightning right out of 'em, afore they would hev stood any sich treatment as you dough-faces have swallowed to-night. I say it ag'in, an' I say it boldly, old Brigham and his pards jist own this town, an' they run it, too, to suit themselves. Me and my pard here are strangers, and yet we're the only two men in town that dare to wag a jaw at these durned Mormon brutes!"

"Let's raise a crowd—go after these fellows and bring this Clark back, and try him for what he's done," the old gray-beard suggested. Despite his age, he was as good a man as there was in the town.

"I second that motion!" put in Gold Dan, promptly.

"I'm your antelope!" yelled the Red-Dogite.

"We want a captain!" cried a brawny six-footer in the crowd.

"Gold Dan!" suggested another.

This idea met with favor at once, and a tremendous cry of Gold Dan went up on the air.

The plainsman would fain have declined the honor, but the people at large insisted, and the man-from-Red-Dog the loudest of all, so at last the borderer was compelled to accept.

And then there was a furbishing up of arms, and a mounting in hot haste.

The blood of the men of Corinne was up, and they were determined to punish the Mormons for their bold invasion of their town.

They were determined to show to the world at large that Brigham and his brood did not own the town of Corinne.

And no light task was it, mind you, that these hardy townsmen had taken upon themselves.

No bolder, nor more reckless ruffians, than the Danite band was there in all the Western land. Men steeped in crime, they held their lives as lightly as they did their money.

CHAPTER XXXV.

PREPARING FOR THE FIGHT.

THE Mormons had ridden leisurely out of the town, taking the trail southward toward Salt Lake.

No fear of pursuit was in their minds; if such an idea as the citizens of Corinne rising *en masse*, and coming forth to give them battle, had been suggested, they would have received it with shouts of derision.

Too long had they ruled with an iron hand, to fear resistance now.

Clark rode on at the head of the band, moody and silent. Dark thoughts were in his mind; he had satisfied his vengeance, but that was little recompense for the treasure he had lost.

Just one bright glimpse of a happier, better life he had seen, and then the vision had been rudely dispelled.

Was it a wonder that the dark browed Danite was sullen of face and scant in speech?

His men, used to his humors, rode on behind and did not attempt to force their company upon him.

Some three miles they had ridden, and the "Mormon Swords" had just about got through chuckling over the clever manner in which their leader had settled the point in dispute in Corinne by shooting the cause of it outright, when the appearance of two horsemen, galloping at full speed after them, attracted their attention.

"Hyers all Corinne a-comin' to lay us out!" cried one burly ruffian.

"Only two men!" responded another; "why, they won't make more than a morsel for us!"

"Oh, thar's more ahind; this pair is only the advanced guard!" a third suggested.

And so they joked in regard to the horsemen, but that the townsmen would attempt to pursue them, was too ridiculous an idea to be entertained for a moment.

Finally, as the horsemen came nearer and nearer—the two were riding at topmost speed, while the Danites were just jogging along at a moderate pace, so that it was easy for the strangers to overtake them—the sound of their horses' hoofs attracted the attention of Clark.

Turning in the saddle, he surveyed them, and an expression of annoyance passed over his dark face. He evidently recognized them.

"Ride on, boys," he said, reining his horse in and allowing the rest to pass him. "I want to have a few words with this party yonder, and I'll soon overtake you."

The band proceeded without a word; they were not accustomed to either dispute or question the commands of their leader. Rough and rude as they were, outcasts of every nation, stained with every crime, yet the Duke of Corinne ruled them with a rod of iron. With such men it was the only way; a less powerful hand would have been set at naught.

"What does the fool want, now?" the Danite leader muttered as he halted in the center of the road, and waited for the two horsemen to come up. "He is crazy, or so near it that he might as well be. It's a mystery to me what makes the other one stick to him, but it's the nature of the animal, I suppose!"

The two horsemen, urging their steeds onward at full speed, soon reached the side of the Danite.

The foremost rider was the wild, peculiar-acting Texan, Jules Mercado; the second, his delicate, effeminate brother.

Mercado had altered greatly in his appearance during the last few days; his face had become pale and thin, while his eyes had seemingly grown unnaturally large.

"You are pursued!" cried the Texan, as he rode up.

"Pursued?" questioned the Danite, not exactly under standing the warning, for so thoroughly did he hold the prowess of the men of the town of Corinne in contempt, that he never even thought of them daring to attempt such a thing.

"Yes, pursued, and they are close behind me, too."

"They—who?"

"Twenty or thirty Corinne men, headed by that demon whom I cannot kill!" the Texan cried, a touch of wildness in his manner.

"You mean Gold Dan?"

"Yes, that is what he calls himself now, but he is not Gold Dan, or else I am crazy."

Clark felt very much inclined to tell the speaker that he believed that he was, but the Danite seldom wasted words, and so the sentence was not spoken.

"They are coming to take you back to Corinne, to try you for killing the old man," the Texan explained. "I was asked to join the party, for they wanted to muster every man in the town who could pull a trigger. I agreed, of course, but instead of doing so, I mounted my horse, and made a circuit round the town, so as to be able to warn you of their pursuit."

"Are they tired of life, these men of Corinne, that they seek for certain death?" the Danite asked, grimly, "or do they fancy that I have forgotten how to pull a trigger, and will run like a rabbit when I hear the clatter of their hoofs?"

"You will fight them, of course?" the Texan asked, eagerly.

"Yes, if they don't get frightened and scamper back to Corinne, when they see that I am prepared for them, and mean business every time!"

"Oh, they will try the question with you!" the Texan exclaimed, confidently. "I'll stay and fight in your band. Perhaps I may be more lucky in the daylight with this man, for by night he seems to bear a charmed life."

"As you please," Clark replied, and then he nodded toward the younger rider, who, seated motionless on his steed, just out of ear-shot of the two, seemed sadly dejected. "You had better send that party a little way on in the advance. If these fellows attack us, which I can hardly believe they will dare to do, a stray bullet might do much harm."

"I will attend to it."

And then the two rode on, followed by the boy, and soon overtook the band.

Great was the astonishment of the Danites when they were informed that they were pursued by the men of Corinne, and that there was a probability of a fight. At first they were inclined to scout at the idea, but when, in a few words, Clark bade them prepare for action, they began to believe that it was the truth.

The troop reached a level prairie plain, about a mile square, perhaps, through which the trail ran, the Great Salt Lake bounding it on the west.

"This will do!" exclaimed Clark, as the party reached the center of the plain. "A better ground for a fight we couldn't have, and if they whip us, why there's the broken country beyond to cover our retreat."

A laugh of derision went up on the air from the lips of the outlaws, at the thoughts of a defeat.

"These Corinne chaps!" cried a burly ruffian, "why, we'll eat 'em without salt!"

And this was the general opinion. In fact, very few of the Danites believed that the townsmen would dare to attack, when they saw that they were waited for.

"No, sir-ee!" cried one of the band, "you won't find those sports eager to find out what kind of stuff we are made of! They'll fire a few shots, mabbe, and then when we go for 'em, they'll break and dust as if blazes was arter 'em!"

The Danite chief deployed his men in a long single line, himself in the center and the Texan by his side, while the brother was placed some fifty paces in the rear.

Hardly had the Mormons prepared for battle, when forth from the rolling foot-hills rode the townsmen.

Twenty picked men were there in the ranks of Corinne, besides their leader, the plainsman, Gold Dan.

And, as the party emerging into the plain deployed also in a single line, the Danite chief, with his keen eyes, noted that nearly every man in the outfit was armed with a rifle.

This Clark had not calculated upon, for only a few of his men were so equipped, and the discovery caused a frown to gather upon his ever-sullen brows.

The rifles gave the townsmen the advantage, as they could easily pick the Mormons off—thanks to their longer-range pieces—before the others could get near enough to return the fire.

Within about a quarter-of-a-mile the new-comers came; then they halted, and the old gray-bearded fellow, affixing a white handkerchief to the end of his rifle-barrel, rode forward as a flag of truce.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THE BATTLE.

"A FLAG of truce!" muttered Clark; "what do they want to say, anyway?"

"Shall I plug him, Cap?" asked the nearest Danite, a stout fellow on the right of the line, armed with a rifle.

"Oh, no; let's hear what they want."

And Clark rode forward to meet the flag.

The bearer was well known to the Danite, by sight. Ben Smith he was called, a boss-teamster, and reputed to be as good a man of his inches as there was west of the Missouri, despite his age.

"I'm sorry that I've come on rather unpleasant business, Mr. Clark," he said, bluntly.

"Yes," replied the Danite, shortly.

"We want you to surrender to us and go back to Corinne and stand your trial for the killing of the old man."

"Oh, you want to try me?"

"Yes."

"Who, pray? I wasn't aware that you had any law courts in Corinne?"

"Judge Lynch answered your turn the other night, and you hadn't oughter object to the judge, now that your time has come to face the music."

"Judge Lynch is to try me, eh?"

"Yes. Oh, you'll have a good, fair trial; we guarantee that, and if you prove that the old fellow did commit those murders, of course the verdict will be not guilty."

"And if I don't prove it?"

"Well, I reckon in that case that we'll hang you, Mr. Clark, as an example."

"I'm very much obliged to you indeed," the Danite said, with that grim sort of humor which was so peculiar to him, "but I reckon that I won't come to Corinne to stand any trial just now; I'm pretty comfortable where I am; thanking you all the same for your kindness."

"Well, Mr. Clark, we shall have to try to take you!" Smith announced, with significant earnestness.

"You don't mean it?"

"Oh, yes we do!"

"Why, I've got ten more men than you have, and my dogs, too, fight with halters around their necks."

"I reckon that we are the better armed, and kin pop you off at long range, if you really force us to fight you."

"That remains to be seen," Clark retorted, carelessly. "But, as for my forcing a fight on you, why the boot is on the other leg. Go your way; the prairie is wide."

"Clark, we've come for you, and we're going to have you if it takes every man in our outfit!" the Corinne man averred, decidedly.

"Oh, *that's* your talk, is it?" the Danite answered, insolently.

"Now, listen to me: I'll give you just five minutes to get back to your line with that flag of truce, and then I'll charge, and after we get through with you, I reckon that there won't be many of you chaps able to go home to Corinne and tell your town how you hunted for John Clark on the prairie, and found him."

"That's your game?"

"Yes, and you'll find that I will play it for all my hand is worth."

The flag-of-truce bearer turned and rode rapidly back to where the Gentiles were in line.

"Look out, boys! It's fight!" he cried, as he rode up, "and they'll be down upon us in a brace of shakes!"

Quickly Gold Dan gave the command for action.

"Let every man take the fellow that is opposite to him, and don't fire until you are sure of your mark!"

And then, as the borderer ranged his eyes over the line of the foe, he detected the Texan in the opposing ranks, and also caught sight of the drooping, boyish figure, sitting so statue-like in the saddle, on the prairie beyond.

For a moment the stout and hardy adventurer—the man whose life had been one constant succession of perils—almost reeled in the saddle.

"Oh, I recognize them, now!" he muttered, the words escaping from lips strangely white. "I have been blind that I did not recognize him before, but *her* I have not seen. Now I understand why such bitter attacks upon my life have been made, and who is the guardian angel that strove so earnestly to warn me of the peril that threatened me; I understand all, now. The chase is up at last; I have hunted them down, but will I win or lose?"

Small time had the plainsman for reflection, for as the Danite had said, within five minutes he gave the command to advance, and like a flock of hungry hawks swooping down upon their prey, the Danites dashed over the prairie at topmost speed toward their foes.

Clark had calculated, with a single bold charge, to break the ranks of the borderers, for he did not believe that they would stand to encounter the onset.

But, as we have said, the Gentiles were all picked men, excel-

lent rifle-shots, and nearly all of them were either scouts or teamsters used to frontier warfare.

"Steady, men; steady!" Dan cautioned, as the Danites, with wild cries, came dashing on. "Pick your men, and don't waste a shot!"

Little need of the caution, for each and every man of the outfit was fully prepared.

When the charging line got within about six hundred yards, they commenced to open fire, but the distance was too great, and the volley whistled harmlessly over the heads of the Gentiles; but when the Mormons got inside of four hundred yards, then all along the Gentile ranks burst forth a sheet of flame.

Terrible was the effect of the well-directed fire.

Ten men were down, either killed outright or else badly wounded, and some five more, though not unhorsed, yet had received quite sufficient taste of Gentile lead to last them for many a day.

"Charge, boys! Give it to 'em!" cried Gold Dan, at the top of his lungs, perceiving that the decisive moment had arrived.

The Gentiles yelled and charged, revolvers in hand.

Dismayed at their bloody reception, and struck with terror by the heavy loss that they had sustained, the Danites broke and fled in great confusion.

In vain did John Clark, who by a miracle almost had escaped serious injury, although bleeding from two wounds, attempt to rally them.

The ruffians had received too great a shock, and the Danite chief, perceiving that it was useless to attempt to turn the fortunes of the day, reluctantly put spurs to his horse and fled with the rest, and as the Danites were better mounted than the borderers, who had been obliged to pick up what steeds they could, easily succeeded in making good their escape.

The Gentiles pursued the ruffians until they lost them in the wooded defiles beyond the plain, and then, perforce, gave up the chase.

But, the victory was complete; never before, in all the annals of Utah, had the Danites received such a terrible beating, and gloomy and full of wrath indeed were the Destroying Angels when they straggled into their camp on Antelope Island, one by one, a few hours afterward, and realized that by a single blow they had lost one-third of their band.

And the Danite chief, too, was missing. At first it was believed that he had fallen at the murderous discharge; but then, when some recalled the fact that he had endeavored to rally the panic-stricken line, and others told how they had noticed the blood streaming down his deer-skin garb, it was generally concluded that in some lonely defile the stern chief of the White Savages had succumbed to his wounds, and found an unknown grave.

John Clark never joined the Danite band again, nor was he ever seen by any of them.

The Mormon leaders, when informed of the disaster that had befallen their chosen band, "the Swords of Gideon," and of the absence of Clark, caused careful search to be made for him.

His den in the mountains was visited, but the hand of the destroyer had been there also. Gunpowder and fire had done their work; the rude hut had been destroyed; naught but ashes remained; the roof of the little cave had been blown up with gunpowder, and a most desolate picture it presented.

To the Mormon mind it was plain that the Gentiles, flushed with victory, had pursued the Duke of Corinne to his retreat in the mountains, and there settled in full the score of hate.

And the Mormons lamented the loss of stern John Clark, for no such man as he did they ever find again.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

HUNTED DOWN AT LAST.

THE pursuit ended, the victorious Gentiles returned to view the field whereon the fight had been won so easily; eager, too, if possible, to relieve the suffering of the wounded men.

The Gentiles had come out of the fight almost without a scratch.

And Dan, who in the excitement of the fight had lost sight of the two Texans, now proceeded to search for them. He had not far to look.

Stretched upon the ground, just where he had fallen, right in the front of the charge, was the Texan; a well-aimed rifle-ball had settled his account with this world, but life still lingered within the stubborn frame, although it was quite plain that the man had not long to live.

Over him bent the slender form, dressed in male attire, but evidently a woman, the one whom he had designated as his brother.

Great tears were streaming from her big, black eyes, and in the soft Spanish tongue she called aloud upon all the saints in Heaven to spare her brother.

But what cares stern fate for a woman's prayers or a woman's tears?

The bullet of the frontiersman had done its deadly work only too well, and the time of the stricken man on earth must be measured by minutes, not by hours.

The Texan was perfectly conscious, and was gazing with dull eyes upon the face of the grief-tortured girl, when Gold Dan came up to the group.

Hastily the plainsman dismounted from his steed, and advanced toward the two.

An expression of bitter, impotent hatred came over the face of the stricken man, as his eyes fell upon the one whom he had

tried so hard to kill, but who had so wonderfully escaped the several dangers.

And now, face to face, each recognized the other.

The adventurer knew the brother and sister to be Fernando and Blanche del Colma, and they knew him for Richard Velvet, or Velvet Hand.

Six months before the time of which we write, in Cinnabar City, far up North, under the shadow of great Shasta's peak of eternal snow, Richard Velvet and the queenly Blanche were to have been married; but, only a month before the day set for the wedding, both the brother and sister had mysteriously disappeared.

Velvet Hand had searched high and low, and at last getting a clew, had followed them to Utah.

On the way thither he had come across the body of the true Gold Dan, killed in an Indian fight; the savages had been driven off by a timely arrival of troops, before they had a chance to strip or mutilate the body.

As Velvet Hand looked upon the slain man, he noticed that he bore quite a resemblance to himself; an idea flashed upon him; by assuming to be Gold Dan he would be enabled to search for the fugitives without exciting Del Colma's suspicions, for of course the brother would be on the watch for Velvet Hand, not for an unknown like Gold Dan.

"You have hunted us down at last," the brother said, speaking slowly and with great difficulty.

"I have, for I wished to assure myself that Blanche went with you of her own free will, and under no compulsion."

"And if that is the truth?" Del Colma, asked.

"I am content, and will not complain," Velvet Hand answered, firmly. "It is her right to choose."

"You went with me of your own free will, Blanche, eh?" the brother asked, turning his glassy eyes upon the face of the girl.

"Yes, of my own free will," she answered, slowly, not daring to trust her eyes to rest upon the face of the man she had so cruelly wronged.

"And yet she loves you better than she does her own life," the brother observed, a mocking smile creeping over his face.

"I do not understand the riddle," Velvet Hand said, simply.

"It is easily explained," Del Colma answered. "My mother, on her death-bed, made her swear that she would never leave me while I needed her care. For the last year my brain has been affected. I have been mad at times; I am mad whenever I come in contact with you—frantic with the desire to kill you. She knew this, and to save your life she was willing to go with me wherever I went. Now the mystery is out, and you know why she forsook you."

For a moment the now fast-dying man paused to take breath, then again he proceeded.

"But that is all ended, now. Within a very few minutes my account with this world will be closed, and then she will be free—she will be yours; death alone gives her to you, for with life I never would yield her. Blanche—my sister—kiss me for the last time before you go to this man I hate!"

Terrible was the tone in which Del Colma uttered the words. Even with the chilly clutch of Death's dark angel upon him, he did not relent.

The weeping girl—now only a mere wreck of what she had been only a few short months before, when, in Cinnabar City, she had won the fancy of iron-heart Velvet Hand, the Dick Talbot of other days—bent over the stricken man and pressed a kiss upon his lips, and then, even as the caress was given, there was a quick, sharp report, a moan of pain came from the girl's lips, and she fell heavily upon the wounded man, the shock crushing the frail life from his body; and he died, too, with a mocking smile upon his thin lips.

His last act had been to tear the heart of the man he hated. A small pocket pistol he had held concealed in his hand, and when the girl had bent over him he had placed it against her heart and fired; death had ensued from the wound almost instantly.

For a moment Talbot gazed upon the fearful sight, his senses reeling, and then flying like a madman to his horse, he leaped upon the animal's back, and spurred away at topmost speed.

"All that love me are doomed to die!" he cried, in agony. "Bernice, my first love, is the only one that has ever escaped. Am I, then, fatal to the women who love me? It would seem so. No rest! no peaceful home for me! No children to play around my knee and smooth my path in old age. Oh, fate! if you have nothing better for me in the future than you have given in the past, let me not live, but die and find the rest that is denied me here, in the earth from whence I came."

Straight on Talbot rode through the live-long day, turning neither to the right nor left, save when impassable barriers hemmed in the way.

He sought the waters of Lethe, that he might drink and forget the bitter past.

Never more did the town of Corinne see the manly figure of Gold Dan, and pretty Durango Kate waited long and anxiously for the man she had made up her mind to captivate, but he never came.

Far down in the San Juan mines the wanderer found a habitation, and in the excitement of a new life tried to forget the old.

Some day, when my library-tower is completed, and from my eagle-like nest I can watch the white sails on the sound, the bold shores of Long Island opposite, and the pretty waters of the Mianus at my feet, and the "fit" seizes upon me, I will take my bread-winner in hand again, and tell of the wondrous adventures that befell lion-hearted Dick Talbot down in the Southland mines, where the silver ore shines in the ledge and the gold lies deep in the "pocket."

THE END.

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